BLACKFOOT RIVER

Recreation Management Plan

Adopted March 18, 2010

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

3201 Spurgin Road
Missoula, MT 59804
(406) 542-5500
fwp.mt.gov

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Chas Van Genderen, Parks Division Administrator

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

Acknowledgements

The River Recreation Advisory for Tomorrow (RRAFT) Committee

The River Recreation Advisory for Tomorrow (RRAFT) Committee played an important role in the development of this management plan. The committee helped to establish the desired social and resource conditions on and along the Blackfoot River and provided recommendations on ways to preserve the quality of the recreation experience. Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks would like to thank each member of the committee for their commitment to the river recreation resources of west-central Montana and acknowledge their efforts in the planning process leading up to this management plan.

- Tim Aldrich, Missoula
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- Jim Olson, Hamilton
- Dave Ryan, Missoula
- Gates Watson, Missoula
- Lee Bastian, FWP Region 2 Parks Manager
- Chet Crowser, FWP Region 2 River Recreation Manager (Co-Author of Plan)
- Garry Edson, USFS Ninemile District Ranger
- Dick Fichtler, BLM Outdoor Recreation Planner
- Willis Hintz, Missoula County Sheriff's Office Captain
- Chris Lorentz, FWP Blackfoot Recreation Manager
- Chris McGrath, FWP Blackfoot River Ranger
- Lisa Moisey, Missoula County Parks Coordinator
- Charlie Sperry, FWP Recreation Management Specialist (Co-author of Plan)

Blackfoot River Advocates & Recreationists

The Blackfoot is one of Montana's most treasured river resources. FWP would like to thank all of those people (past, present and future) who have worked hard to protect this river and helped to shape the way it is managed.

Executive Summary

The Blackfoot River is one of Montana's popular rivers for recreation. The river's outstanding natural resources and diversity of recreational opportunities, combined with its proximity to Missoula, contribute to its popularity. In conjunction with this popularity, recreationists, landowners, conservationists and others have expressed concern over the recreational use on the river and how it impacts river resources and the recreation experience. This concern, coupled with the growing human population in the greater Missoula area, necessitates further river recreation management planning in order to ensure that high quality resource conditions and recreation opportunities are retained.

This management plan provides guidance to Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP) when managing recreation on the Blackfoot River, North Fork of the Blackfoot River and adjacent lands owned or managed by FWP. The plan also provides guidance to the FWP Commission. While this plan is designed to assist decision-makers, it does not replace the need for sound judgment, common sense and rational thinking.

The plan describes the settings, characteristics, desired conditions and recreation opportunities for eight different reaches (sections) of the Blackfoot River and its North Fork tributary. The lower reaches of the river will be managed for higher volumes of recreational use with an emphasis on appropriate recreationist behavior that is compatible with the interests of other river users and adjacent landowners. The upper reaches and the North Fork tributary will be managed for lower volumes of use with an emphasis on the quality of the recreation experience. Well maintained facilities, natural resource protection, and attention to public safety are common to all reaches of the river.

The plan builds upon management actions that are currently working well and recognizes that the day-to-day management of resources, sites, and facilities can play a major part in providing a positive visitor experience. For more complex social issues such as river crowding, the department will strive to resolve problems without restricting recreation opportunities. The plan does not call for the implementation of a permit system or other restrictions at this time. Decision-makers will strive to make well-informed decisions based on input from the public and the best available recreation data. This will include the collection of visitor use data in the upper reaches of the river where there is heightened sensitivity to the volume of use and the frequency of encounters. Any future proposal to restrict use would include opportunities for people to express their interests and concerns.

FWP will continue to manage the Blackfoot through strong partnerships with the people of Montana and their guests, landowners, outfitters, communities, county officials, and others who have a passion for this resource and how it is managed. This includes continued cooperation and coordination with the Bureau of Land Management, Forest Service, department of Natural Resources and Conservation, and other federal, state, and county agencies. Through responsible management and a commitment to serving the public, FWP will work to ensure that the Blackfoot River continues to offer a diversity of high-quality recreation opportunities and outstanding natural resources for the enjoyment of people from Montana and around the country.

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List of Tables and Figures

Glossary – Abbreviations, Acronyms & Terms

There are a number of acronyms and terms used throughout this planning document.

BLM.....	Bureau of Land Management
Commercial Use.....	Any person or entity that utilizes land under the control, administration, and jurisdiction of FWP for consideration.
Competitive Event.....	Any organized, sanctioned, or structured use, event, or activity on lands owned or managed by the Department or related waters in which two or more contestants compete, the participants register, enter, or complete an application for the event, and/or a predetermined course or area is designated.
Designated Camping.....	Camping that occurs in campgrounds or other sites formally approved and posted for camping.
Desired Conditions.....	Conditions that the public expects to experience or encounter when recreating on the river.
Dispersed Camping.....	Camping that occurs outside of specifically designated sites.
DNRC.....	Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation
FAS.....	Fishing Access Site
FWP Commission or Commission.....	Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks Commission
FWP or Department.....	Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks
Indicator.....	A measurable variable that is representative of acceptable or desirable conditions.
Management Direction.....	Specific objectives and prescriptions that will guide FWP's decision making in order to achieve the desired condition.
MDT.....	Montana Department of Transportation
Organized Group.....	A structured, ordered, consolidated, or scheduled event on lands owned or managed by FWP or related waters that is not commercial or competitive.

Ration.....	Regulate use intensity by limiting the number of available opportunities to recreate on a river.
Restrictive Management Action	Management actions that restrict or limit recreational opportunities by time, location, quantity, or type.
River Reach or Reach.....	A section of the river defined to manage for different recreational opportunities and experiences based on location.
RRAFT Committee.....	River Recreation Advisory for Tomorrow Citizen Advisory Committee
SRP.....	Blackfoot River Special Recreation Permit Program
Standard.....	The maximum acceptable level for an indicator and exceeding that level could trigger the implementation of a management action.
USFS.....	United States Forest Service

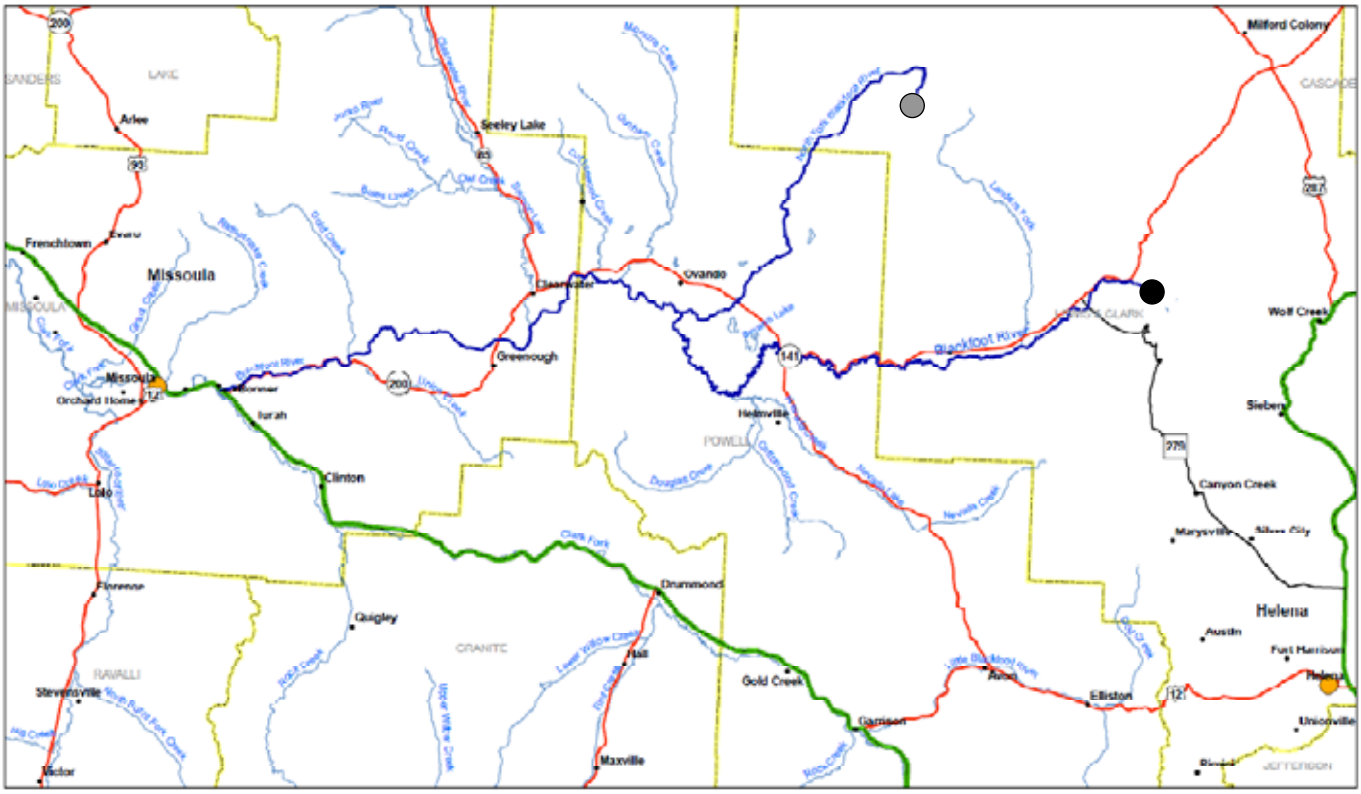
Chapter 1.0 – Introduction

1.1 The Blackfoot River & North Fork of the Blackfoot River

Located in the west-central part of the state, the Blackfoot River is one of twelve renowned "Blue Ribbon" rivers in Montana and is one of Montana's most popular rivers for recreation. The river's outstanding natural resources and diversity of recreational opportunities, combined with its proximity to Missoula, contribute to its popularity. In conjunction with this popularity, people have expressed concern over the recreational use on the river and how it impacts river resources and the recreation experience. This concern, coupled with the growing human population in the greater Missoula area, necessitates further river recreation management planning in order to ensure that high quality resource conditions and recreation opportunities are retained.

The Blackfoot River begins at the junction of Beartrap and Anaconda Creeks, located near the Continental Divide between Rogers Pass and Flesher Pass (see the black dot in Figure 1.1).

Figure 1.1: Blackfoot River and North Fork of the Blackfoot River Location Map



From its headwaters, the river flows westward for 132 miles through Lewis and Clark, Powell, and Missoula Counties, draining a 2,290 square mile basin to Bonner, where it joins the Clark Fork River. The Blackfoot watershed includes 9,000-foot peaks in the headwaters and heavily forested slopes, rangelands and wetlands on the valley floor.

The North Fork of the Blackfoot River (see gray dot in Figure 1.1) begins in the Scapegoat Wilderness, flowing much of its length through a fairly deep, forested canyon within the U.S. Forest Service boundary. As it makes its way to the valley floor, the North Fork flows through a more pastoral setting bordered by private land on its way to the Blackfoot River.

Recreation management and planning for the Blackfoot River dates back to the late 1960's when private landowners and river advocates, working with managing agencies, sought ways to protect the river resources and adjacent lands while at the same time providing recreational opportunities for the public. These efforts laid the groundwork for river recreation management on the Blackfoot, pioneered the concept of providing public access on private land, and set a precedent for collaborative resource and recreation management.
This collaborative approach can be described as a public-private partnership and is based on meaningful communication between the agencies, private landowners, the recreating public, and those who share a passion for the Blackfoot River. It is also the foundation for this management plan.

1.2 Purpose & Scope

The purpose of this recreation management plan is to provide guidance to Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) for managing recreation on the Blackfoot River and North Fork of the Blackfoot River. Implementation of the plan may require FWP Commission rulemaking, which includes additional opportunities for public involvement.

The plan promotes a full variety of high quality recreation opportunities for a diverse public while protecting the natural resource values associated with the river and adjacent uplands. While not a resource management plan, this plan does recognize the important role that resources play in the recreation experience and the potential impacts that recreation can have on those resources.

The plan guides recreation management in three ways. First, the plan identifies the desirable social and resource conditions for different reaches (sections) of the river. Second, the plan identifies management actions that can be implemented on a routine basis to manage recreation and address recreation-related issues. Third, the plan identifies indicators and standards to guide the implementation of future management actions.

This plan encompasses recreation that occurs on the Blackfoot River from its headwaters to its confluence with the Clark Fork River, the North Fork of the Blackfoot River downstream from the United States Forest Service boundary to the river's confluence with the main stem of the Blackfoot River, and lands adjacent to the Blackfoot River and the North Fork of the Blackfoot River that are owned or managed by FWP. This plan does not govern Bureau of Land Management (BLM) decision-making or supersede BLM authority over its lands. The plan does reflect input from the BLM. The plan offers recreation management guidance that could be considered by the BLM and implemented when and where appropriate. This plan does not apply to recreation occurring on private lands or other public lands that are not under the jurisdiction of FWP. However, the plan does address issues that may affect private lands and/or other public lands. Additionally, the plan does not govern fishing regulations or decisions surrounding water usage or water rights.

FWP is the lead agency in the development of this recreation management plan. Cooperation and coordination with other agencies and private landowners is important due to the diverse land ownership adjacent to the river and varying authority and management responsibilities.

1.3 Vision Statement & Guiding Principles

The Blackfoot River is valued for its outstanding recreation and natural resources. It is important to protect the natural resources of the river and to preserve the quality of the recreation experiences for future generations. As the demand on natural resources and the interest in river-related recreation continues to grow, FWP, working for the people of Montana and their visitors, will seek a balance between quality of experience and unrestricted

use of a limited resource. The following principles shall guide management decisions and help to achieve this vision.

- The aquatic and terrestrial resources in and along the Blackfoot River and North Fork of the Blackfoot River contribute significantly to the recreation experience. It is critically important to manage use of the river in a way that protects and in some cases restores these outstanding resources, including coldwater fisheries of the Blackfoot River.

- People visit the Blackfoot River and North Fork of the Blackfoot River for different reasons and expectations vary from person to person. It is therefore important to provide a diverse range of recreation opportunities and experiences. By dividing the rivers into reaches it is possible to manage for different recreation opportunities and experiences based on location. It is also important to manage river use in a way that provides reasonable and equitable opportunities for all river users and results in conditions that are acceptable to the recreating public and those who are affected by river recreation.

- The Blackfoot River watershed includes a mix of private and public land with varying agency authorities and jurisdictions. The cooperative spirit of resource management in the Blackfoot watershed has proven successful and shall be promoted in the future.

- When addressing recreation issues on the Blackfoot River, it is important to assess how management actions might affect recreation opportunities. Less-restrictive management actions should be considered before proceeding to more-restrictive management actions. While less restrictive actions must be considered, more restrictive actions may be implemented either before or in conjunction with less restrictive options if less restrictive actions would have little or no effect.

- The recreating public and those who are affected by recreation want the opportunity to be involved in the decision-making process. It is fundamentally important to provide meaningful opportunities for the public to engage in the planning process and to provide input before decisions are made or restrictions are implemented.

- This management plan, and any rules necessary to implement the plan, must be technically and socially feasible; legal; affordable; measurable; enforceable; and reasonable to administer.

1.4 History of Recreation Planning

Management of recreational use and a conservation program for the river corridor became a topic of discussion with local landowners in the late 1960s. The Nature Conservancy and the University of Montana became involved in the early 1970s and in 1973 the U.S. Department of Interior's Bureau of Outdoor Recreation became a participant. In June of 1976 the Blackfoot River Recreation Corridor Agreement was established and encompassed 26 miles of mostly privately owned river frontage. The area included in the corridor extends from Russell Gates FAS to Johnsrud Park FAS. The agreement between FWP and private landowners allows recreational access to private lands up to 50 feet above the high water mark unless otherwise posted. The agreement also has a specific set of regulations governing recreational use.

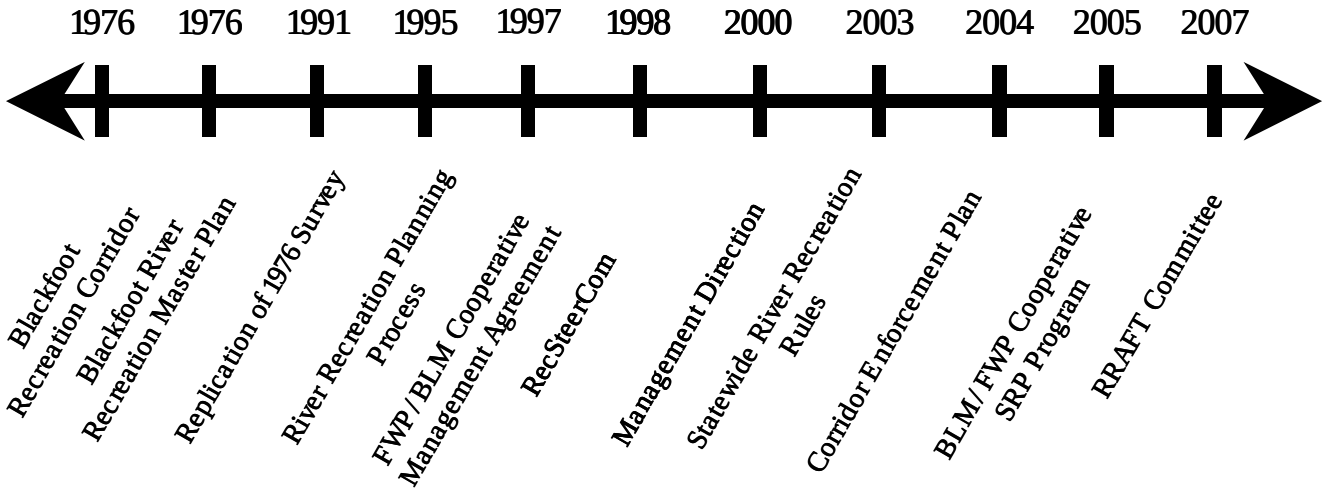
The first recreation planning document for the Blackfoot was entitled *The Blackfoot River, A Conservation and Recreation Management Plan*. This document was published in October of 1976 by The Nature Conservancy and the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation. A study conducted in 1976 by Fish, Wildlife & Parks entitled *Recreational Use on the Lower Blackfoot River* first inventoried public use and developed the first recreation

management guidelines. This study was in part duplicated in 1991 and the results published as *Recreational Use of the Blackfoot River Recreation Corridor*. The results provided use estimates and compared them to the results of the 1976 study. Findings of this study were the primary factors leading to the establishment of the Recreation Steering Committee (RecSteerCom) in 1998. One of the significant contributions of the RecSteerCom was to identify seven river reaches and the desired conditions for each reach. The reach definitions and desired conditions as well as other recommendations for recreation management were published as the *Blackfoot River Recreation Management Direction* in 2000.

More recently, FWP created a set of rules to guide planning and management of river recreation in Montana, worked cooperatively with the Missoula County Sheriff's Department and other emergency response agencies to create a Blackfoot Corridor Law Enforcement Operations Plan, and established a special recreation permitting program with the BLM for authorizing commercial use, competitive events and organized group activities.

In 2007 FWP appointed the River Recreation Advisory for Tomorrow (RRAFT) Committee. The RRAFT Committee, a diverse group of individuals interested in river resources and river recreation, was tasked with developing recommendations for this management plan. Figure 1.2 shows a timeline of important steps in the recreation management history of the Blackfoot.

Figure 1.2: Blackfoot River Recreation Management History Timeline



1.5 Planning Process Overview

In June of 2007, FWP appointed a citizen advisory committee called the River Recreation Advisory for Tomorrow (RRAFT) Committee to develop recommendations for a Blackfoot River recreation management plan and provide input on recreation management issues on other rivers in west-central Montana.

The RRAFT Committee was intentionally formed as a diverse group of individuals appointed to represent the various river recreation management interests and the interests of those who are affected by management actions. This included interests such as anglers, boaters, private landowners, commercial outfitters, and conservationists. The committee also included agency representatives from FWP, the BLM, USFS, Missoula County Sheriff's Department and Missoula County Parks. The committee held 30 meetings from June 2007 through May 2009 to develop recommendations for managing recreation on the Blackfoot River and presented those recommendations to the FWP Region 2 Regional Park Manager and the Parks Division Administrator.

To facilitate public involvement, FWP established a Blackfoot River Recreation Management Plan web page that provided information about the planning process, including updates on the RRAFT meetings, and enabled the public to submit comments at any time during the process.

Based on the recommendations of the RRAFT committee and input from staff, FWP developed a draft plan and environmental assessment (EA). The purpose of the EA was to assess the impacts of adopting the plan and implementing recommended management actions. The EA identified and discussed key issues, presented a range of alternatives to address those issues and identified the predicted impacts and consequences to the environment with each alternative.

The Draft Plan and EA were made available for public review and comment from October 14, 2009 through December 16, 2009. FWP conducted open houses in Missoula and Ovando. An additional public meeting was conducted in Ovando to provide more information about the proposed plan. The public comment period generated 83 formal comments.

On March 18, 2010 the FWP Parks Division Administrator issued a decision notice for the environmental assessment and adopted a Final Blackfoot River Recreation Management Plan. The Final Plan will guide recreation management decisions on the Blackfoot River and North Fork of the Blackfoot River for the next 10 to 15 years.

1.6 Land Ownership & Jurisdiction

Lands along the Blackfoot River are owned or managed by a variety of public and private entities (see descriptions below). Table 1.1 shows the approximate percentage of riverfront land ownership along the Blackfoot River and North Fork of the Blackfoot River.

Table 1.1: Blackfoot River & North Fork of the Blackfoot Riverfront Land Ownership

Blackfoot River	
Owner	% Ownership/Stewardship
Private	65%
Bureau of Land Management	13%
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks	6%
The Nature Conservancy	5%
US Forest Service	4%
State of Montana (DNRC & MDT)	3%
University of Montana - Lubrecht Forest	3%
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service	1%
North Fork of the Blackfoot River	
Owner	% Ownership/Stewardship
Private	59%
US Forest Service	38%
FWP	3%

Private

The majority of lands along the Blackfoot River and North Fork of the Blackfoot River are privately owned. This includes ranch and agricultural land as well as seasonal and permanent home sites. While the percentage of

private ownership is high, there are relatively few places in which homes can be seen from the river. Conservation easements exist along the river in many places in the middle reaches of the Blackfoot, particularly from the Helmville/Ovando area to Greenough. These easements were negotiated with individual landowners and in most cases limit development opportunities while entitling the landowner to tax incentives for agreeing to the terms of the easement.

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP)

FWP manages 14 parcels of land (approximately 1600 acres including Aunt Molly Wildlife Management Area) adjacent to the Blackfoot River and North Fork of the Blackfoot River. Most of these parcels are Fishing Access Sites, which provide the primary public access points. In addition, FWP leases 3 parcels from private landowners for the purpose of providing public access at the following sites: Clearwater Bridge (6-Stall), Sunset Hill (3-Stall), and Roundup. FWP also manages recreational use in accordance with the Blackfoot River Recreation Corridor Landowner's Agreement.

Bureau of Land Management (BLM)

The BLM manages the largest percentage of public land along the Blackfoot River. A significant portion of this land lies between Corricks River Bend FAS and Johnsrud Park FAS. Recreation on the Blackfoot River is managed cooperatively through a successful BLM/FWP partnership.

The Nature Conservancy (TNC)

TNC is one of the world's largest conservation organizations. Since 1979, TNC has conserved more than a half million acres of land in Montana. In 2008 TNC began the purchase of hundreds of thousands of acres of land in western Montana from Plum Creek Timber Company. Some of this acreage borders the Blackfoot River. In the future, these lands may be sold to private landowners or public management agencies. Lands owned and held by TNC are open to the public for recreation.

United States Forest Service (USFS)

The USFS manages a small percentage of land in the upper stretches of the Blackfoot River and a considerable percentage of land on the North Fork of the Blackfoot River. The section of the North Fork within the Bob Marshall Wilderness Area Complex is managed in accordance with the Bob Marshall Wilderness Area Complex Management Plan.

Montana Department of Natural Resources & Conservation (DNRC)

DNRC manages a small percentage of land adjacent to the Blackfoot River. DNRC manages these lands to provide income for the State Education Trust. DNRC also has responsibility for fire control on state lands, including FWP lands. The Blackfoot River is listed as a navigable water way under the jurisdiction of the State of Montana. As a result, the streambed below the low-water mark is managed as state trust land by DNRC.

University of Montana - Lubrecht Experimental Forest

The Lubrecht Experimental Forest is a 28,000-acre outdoor classroom and laboratory managed primarily by the University of Montana (DNRC has management responsibility for some of the forest). The forest was established in 1937 after an initial donation of over 19,000 acres from the Anaconda Company. In addition to research and education opportunities, the forest provides a variety of year-round recreational opportunities including walk-in access to the Blackfoot River.

County Government

The Blackfoot River flows through Lewis & Clark, Powell and Missoula Counties. The North Fork of the Blackfoot River flows through Lewis & Clark and Powell Counties. Under state law, these counties are responsible for reviewing the planning, road maintenance, and zoning for subdivisions and other use and development restrictions within their respective jurisdictions. In addition, each county has a Conservation District, which, in cooperation with FWP, establishes rules and administers the Montana Natural Streambed and Land Preservation Act (commonly called the 310 permitting process). This permit is required by any private individual or non-governmental entity proposing any activity that physically alters or modifies the bed or banks of a stream.

Each of the respective county sheriff's offices bear primary responsibility for search and rescue as well as other emergency responses within the river corridor. FWP River Managers, Wardens and River Rangers provide interagency support for emergency response.

1.7 Management Authority

FWP has statutory authority to manage recreational use of publicly accessible waters in Montana (MCA 87-1-303). FWP also has authority to manage use that occurs on lands under the jurisdiction or control of FWP (MCA 23-1-106). In addition to these statutes, the following rules, plans and documents are relevant to this plan.

Rules

- FWP Statewide River Recreation Rules *(ARM 12.11.401 through 12.11.455).* Rules that govern the development of river recreation management plans and rules.

- FWP Commercial Use Rules *(ARM 12.14.101 through 12.14.170).* Rules that govern commercial use that occurs on lands under the jurisdiction of FWP.

- Blackfoot River Special Recreation Permit (SRP) Rules *(ARM 12.11.6501 through 12.11.6575).* Rules that govern special recreation permits for commercial use, competitive events, and organized group activities.

- FWP Public Use Regulations *(ARM 12.8.201 through 12.8.213).* Rules that govern the use of all lands or waters under the control, administration, and jurisdiction of Fish, Wildlife and Parks (including designated recreation areas).

- Blackfoot River Motorized Watercraft Closure *(ARM 12.11.615(2)).* Rule that prohibits motorized watercraft on the Blackfoot River and all tributaries from their headwaters to the old Stimson Lumber Mill Dam at Bonner

Plans & Other Documents

- Blackfoot River Recreation Corridor Landowner's Agreement. A cooperative agreement between landowners and FWP that provides public access up to 50 feet above the ordinary high water mark unless otherwise posted. This agreement also contains a specific set of regulations pertaining to recreational use.

- Cooperative Management Agreement Between the BLM and FWP for the Management of Recreation Use on Public Land and Water Resources within the Blackfoot River Corridor. A management agreement between FWP and the BLM that establishes the terms for cooperative management of recreation on the Blackfoot River and adjacent owned or managed lands.

- Blackfoot River Recreation Management Direction. A management document produced in 2000 that identified management reaches of the Blackfoot River and North Fork of the Blackfoot River, desired recreation settings for these reaches and issues pertaining to river recreation management.

- BLM Garnet Resource Area Management Plan. A BLM management plan that includes management direction for BLM lands in the Blackfoot River drainage.

- Bob Marshall Wilderness Area Complex Management Plan. A USFS management plan that governs management of the portion of the North Fork of the Blackfoot River contained within the Bob Marshall Wilderness Area Complex.

Chapter 2.0 – Recreation and Resource Values

2.1 Introduction

The Blackfoot River is renowned for its recreation and resource values. This chapter provides an overview of the recreation, natural, heritage and economic resources and sets the stage for discussing ways to protect these values for future generations.

2.2 Recreation Values

Angling

Angling occurs year-round and is most popular in the early spring, summer and fall. Opportunities exist for both wade and float angling and while fly-fishing is particularly popular, artificial lures and bait fishing is also common.

Floating

Recreational floating is a popular activity due to the beautiful scenery, varied water conditions, and opportunities to observe birds and wildlife. During spring runoff and associated high-flows, portions of the Blackfoot and North Fork of the Blackfoot are popular among more skilled whitewater boaters. During much of the year the level of difficulty is relatively mild and floaters can find opportunities to suit almost all skill levels.

Inner-tubing

Inner-tubing is popular on the lower reaches of the Blackfoot and occurs primarily in the mid to late summer months after high spring flows have receded and the water and air temperatures have warmed. A particularly popular inner-tubing section exists between Whitaker Bridge and Johnsrud Park FAS.

Picnicking, Birding, & Other Land-based Recreation

In addition to providing access to the river, access sites provide opportunities for picnickers, birders, campers, hikers, sunbathers, hunters and other land-based recreationists. Many of these sites offer scenic settings, camping, and direct access to a variety of recreational opportunities.

Commercial Use

Commercial service providers are important to those who seek the knowledge and skill of an experienced guide or outfitter to enhance their recreation experience. All commercial river users are required to obtain a permit, pay a fee for commercial use and abide by specific terms and conditions that govern use of the permit. To date, there are nearly 90 registered commercial users providing services that include angling trips, whitewater trips, scenic floats, swift water rescue courses and shuttle services.

River Access

There are more than 30 publicly owned or managed access sites along the river. Some access sites are located near local communities and, in addition to river access, provide convenient land-based recreation opportunities. In addition to individual public access sites, within the Blackfoot River Recreation Corridor (Russell Gates FAS to Johnsrud Park FAS) the public is allowed to access the river via private land, up to 50 feet above the ordinary

high water mark unless otherwise posted. Appendix A lists each of the public access sites, their location and existing facilities.

Recreation Use Statistics and Trends

The collection of recreation use data has been ongoing since the first recreation management efforts of the late 1970's. These data collection efforts have focused on areas such as recreationist expectations, desires and satisfaction, landowner satisfaction, recreation use estimation, and commercial use. Trends indicate that overall recreation use on the Blackfoot River has and continues to increase. This is likely due to a combination of increased population growth, an improved fishery, and a general increase in the popularity of river recreation.

A study conducted in 2002 provided reliable overall recreational use estimates for each of the seven river reaches and portrayed general trends in use and user satisfaction. The data collected lacked enough specificity however, to make reliable inferences related specifically to amount, type, time and location of use.

Recently, FWP and the BLM have begun to improve the level of specificity in data sets through the hiring of a summer use monitoring Survey Technician as well as requiring commercial outfitters to submit annual use reports as part of the Blackfoot SRP program.

During the past two years (2007 and 2008) FWP has compiled a Blackfoot River Recreation Management Annual Report that highlights topics such as seasonal conditions, visitor use statistics, the SRP program, and recreation management accomplishments. The Annual Report incorporates improved data collection efforts to provide a snapshot of recreation occurring on the Blackfoot River. These reports are available to the public and contain the most current information on recreation use statistics and trends. See Figure 2.1, Figure 2.2 and Table 2.1 for highlights.

Figure 2.1: Percentage of People per Activity per Site (Summer 2008)

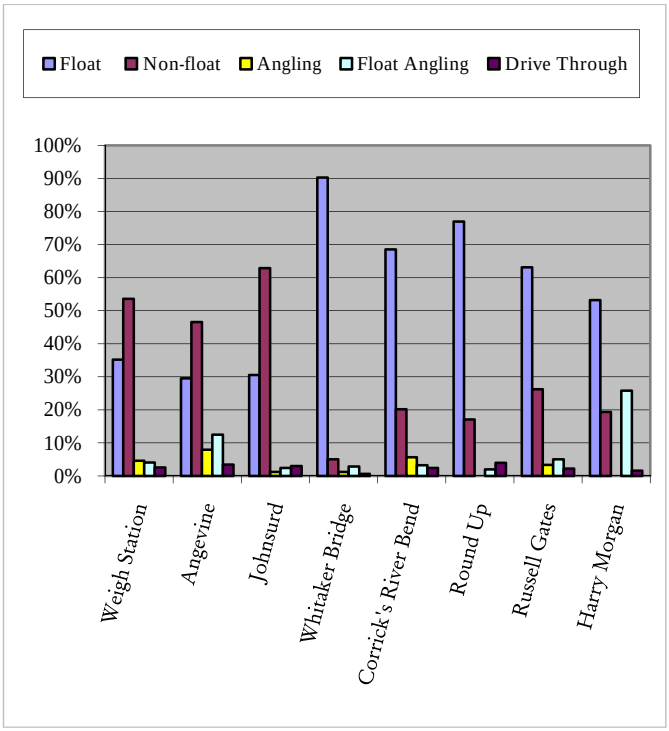


Figure 2.2: 2007 & 2008 Blackfoot Commercial User Days by Use Type and Reach

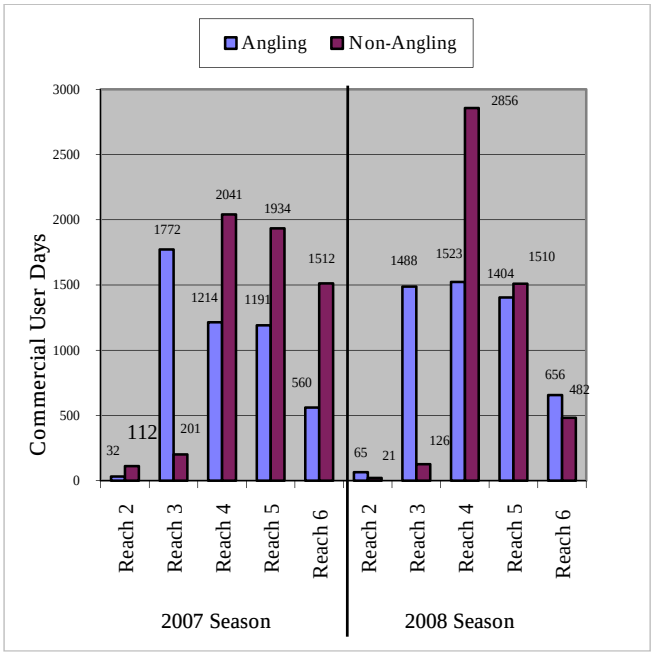


Table 2.1: Comparison of Angling Pressure (in Angling Days) on the Blackfoot River and North Fork of the Blackfoot River (2001-2007).

River Section	Angling Days/Year			
	2001	2003	2005	2007
Headwaters to Arrastra Creek	4939	4142	7220	3182
Arrastra Creek to the North Fork	5050	5072	2900	4286
North Fork to the Clearwater River	12940	11355	8549	12685
Clearwater River to the Mouth of the Blackfoot	13330	18456	18268	13580
Blackfoot Total	36259	39025	36937	33733
North Fork Blackfoot River	1058	833	2602	953

Natural Resource Values

Fish, wildlife, vegetation, and the water itself are just a few of the outstanding natural resource values that contribute to the recreation experience and help to define the Blackfoot River and North Fork of the Blackfoot River. The following section briefly describes these resources within the context of river recreation.

Water Resources

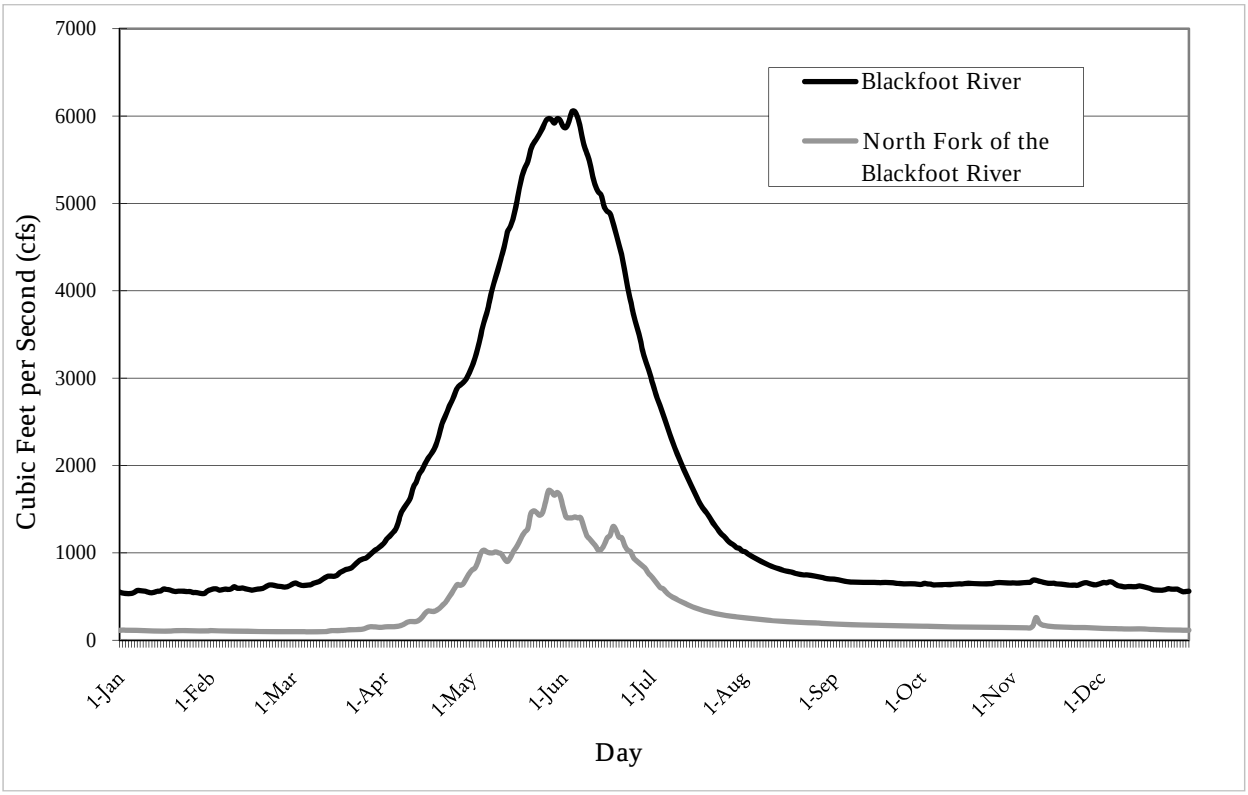
The gradient, volume, timing of flows and water quality can all influence available river recreation opportunities. From its headwaters to Mineral Hill (near the junction of MT Hwy. 200 and MT Hwy. 141), the Blackfoot River flows between steep, forested slopes. Above the community of Lincoln, the river flows underground during most years and then reappears below Lincoln. Before reaching Nevada Creek, the river meanders through cottonwood forests and wetlands, with the gradient increasing about four miles downstream from its confluence with Nevada Creek on its way to the North Fork of the Blackfoot. For its remaining 52 miles, the Blackfoot levels out and flows through open ranch land and timbered uplands. The gradient increases again from Roundup FAS to Johnsrud Park FAS travelling through a timbered and narrow canyon with high walls. The stream gradients throughout the Blackfoot River change from very steep in the headwaters area, to much flatter throughout the upper and middle valley reaches and then become steep again in the canyon of the lower river.

The North Fork of the Blackfoot River cascades swiftly from its headwaters in the Scapegoat Wilderness, increasing steadily in volume as it reaches the valley floor. The upper stretches pass through a fairly steep and forested canyon before emerging into a more pastoral setting as it nears its confluence with the main stem. The gradient of the stream decreases over its length beginning with difficult whitewater and then flatting out as it nears the Blackfoot.

The Blackfoot River and North Fork of the Blackfoot River flow year-round. Figure 2.1 shows a hydrograph of the Blackfoot River and North Fork of the Blackfoot Rivers' historic average monthly stream flows. Blackfoot River flows are taken at the US Geological Survey gauging station near Bonner (#12340000). The North Fork of the Blackfoot River flows are taken at the US Geological Survey Dry Gulch gauging station near Ovando (#12338300).
Water quantity is influenced by the amount of precipitation that occurs and the amount of water diverted from the river for irrigation. Peak runoff typically occurs between May and July. Low flows can limit floating opportunities above the confluence of the mainstem and North Fork during certain times of the year. Below the confluence, opportunities for float recreation are available most of the year during normal flows. A maximum stream flow of 19,200 cubic feet per second (cfs) was recorded for the Blackfoot on June 10, 1964, and a minimum flow of 200 cfs recorded on January 4 & 5, 1950. The water temperature of the Blackfoot River ranges from around freezing in the winter to 60-75 degrees F (10-20 degrees C) in summer.

Water quality in the Blackfoot is high with most monitoring sites indicating slight or no impairment. Except during spring runoff when the river experiences increased turbidity, suspended sediment in the river is generally minimal, leaving the Blackfoot clear with good visibility for most of the year. The Montana Department of Environmental Quality classifies the Blackfoot as a B-1 stream, meaning the river should be maintained for activities such as drinking and municipal uses, swimming and recreation, growth and propagation of trout and associated aquatic life, and as an agricultural and industrial water supply.

Figure 2.3: Historic Average Monthly Stream Flow for the Blackfoot River & North Fork of the Blackfoot River



Fisheries & Aquatic Resources

The Blackfoot River is a popular angling destination and is managed as a wild trout fishery, emphasizing natural reproduction. The basin is also the focus of native fish recovery efforts. The Blackfoot River is home to eleven native fish species including bull trout, westslope cutthroat trout, mountain whitefish, northern pike minnow, longnose and largescale sucker, and two species of sculpin. Eight non-native fish species inhabit the Blackfoot including brown trout, brook trout, rainbow trout, Yellowstone cutthroat trout, northern pike, fathead minnow, largemouth bass, and white suckers. Dominant fish species vary from westslope cutthroat and brook trout in the headwaters, brown trout from Lincoln to the North Fork confluence and rainbow trout from the North Fork confluence to the Blackfoot's confluence with the Clark Fork River.

Wildlife & Terrestrial Resources

The Blackfoot watershed provides abundant and varied habitat for a suite of wildlife species. The Montana Natural Heritage Program has determined that approximately 50 species of mammals, 230 species of birds and 4 species of amphibians utilize the area for permanent or migratory habitat. Whitetail deer, mule deer, elk, and black bear are commonly seen throughout the Blackfoot River drainage. Bighorn sheep can be spotted in rocky areas near Bonner and a sharp eye will occasionally identify moose. Grizzly bear, gray wolf and mountain lion also inhabit the Blackfoot, although sightings are less common. Upland game birds such as ruffed and blue grouse and waterfowl are common with frequent sightings of Canada goose, common merganser, mallard and great blue heron along the river. A variety of raptors can also be seen from the river and include red-tailed hawk, bald eagle, osprey and golden eagle. A wide variety of songbirds, small mammals, reptiles and amphibians are also present, many of which can be found in and around the riparian and adjacent upland areas.

Vegetation

Plant species growing along the banks of the river consist primarily of woody riparian vegetation such as willow, dogwood and cottonwood.

Lodgepole pine, ponderosa pine, Douglas-fir and western larch can all be found adjacent to the river and on surrounding uplands, with under story groundcover such as kinnikinnik, juniper, snowberry and Oregon grape interspersed with grasses and forbs.

Geology & Soils

The bedrock in the Blackfoot is comprised primarily of sedimentary rock interspersed with granite and capped with lava rock. During the ice ages, glaciers flowed from the upper Blackfoot in the east and from the Swan Valley in the north shaping many of the landscape characteristics of the Blackfoot Valley that we see today. As the glaciers receded, they deposited glacial debris forming small hills and ridges along the valley floor. These hills and ridges created marsh and wetland areas where drainage collects today.

Open Space, Land Use & Aesthetics

Open space, land use and communities in the Blackfoot River valley define the aesthetic character of the Blackfoot and influence the quality of the recreational experience on the river. The viewshed within the river corridor includes the river itself, stream banks, canyon walls, and ridge tops on the skyline. Major land uses within the Blackfoot watershed include logging and ranching with both the upper and lower reaches of the drainage having experienced an increase in residential development (primary residences and recreational homes). Logging occurs primarily on adjacent private and public uplands and ranching occurs in the middle reaches of the drainage using water from the river to irrigate hayfields. Mining occurs to a lesser degree in the upper reaches of the river. Communities in or near the Blackfoot River watershed include Lincoln (pop. 1,100), Helmville (pop. 243), Ovando (pop. 71), Seeley Lake (pop. 1436), Greenough/Potomac (pop. 1,088), Bonner/West Riverside (pop. 1,693), East Missoula (pop. 2,070) and Missoula (pop. 64,081).

2.3 Heritage Resource Values

Historic Use of the Blackfoot River

The Blackfoot River has been an important part of the Western Montana landscape throughout the course of prehistory, history and modern times. Throughout those times, humans have used the Blackfoot for a travel corridor, subsistence resources, economic resources and recreation. American Indians were some of the early users of the Blackfoot River and the river corridor served as an important travel route for several area tribes. The Nimi'ipuu (Nez Perce) referred to the Blackfoot River as “Cokahlah-ishkit,” which means “Road to the Buffalo.”

In July of 1806, on their return journey, Captain Meriwether Lewis and nine men split from Captain William Clark and the rest of the Corps of Discovery and followed the Blackfoot River heading east, before rejoining on the Missouri River. The early 1800’s also brought trappers to the area in search of pelts for the fur trade.

In 1865 gold was discovered near present day Lincoln and miners came to the area to establish claims. Subsequent gold discoveries in the area expanded the population of local residents and the network of roads between settlements. Stamp mills, used to extract gold from ore, demanded large quantities of lumber and subsequently led to a thriving logging industry. In the late 1800’s and early 1900’s the lower sections of the Blackfoot were used to float logs downriver to the mill in Bonner. Homesteading and ranching followed these mining and timber booms and have had a lasting influence on the character of the Upper Blackfoot. Commercial recreation use of the river also began in the 1920’s with the advent of guest ranches, one of which is still in use today and ranks among the oldest continuing guest ranches in Montana.

Historic Sites, Structures & Landscapes

Throughout the Blackfoot drainage there are remnants of homesteads and farmsteads along with building foundations, mills and mining sites. A number of surveys have been conducted within the Blackfoot drainage in an effort to document the area's historic and cultural resources.

Archeological Resources

Archeological resources have been documented in the form of lithic scatter (surface scatter of stone tools or debris), tree scars, rock cairns and fire hearths/roasting pits. Tree scars exist as a result of American Indians peeling the bark of ponderosa pine trees to expose and harvest the sweet candy-like cambium layer lying underneath. Eight rock cairns marked the original route of the Road to the Buffalo Trail and two can still be visited today. These cairns, which are probably hundreds of years old, served as both markers of the trail and points of spiritual significance. Fire hearths and roasting pits can be found in locations containing camas, a wildflower with an edible bulb that was an important food source for several American Indian tribes and the Lewis and Clark Expedition.

2.4 Economic Resource Values

Rivers and river recreation are an important part of Montana's tourism and travel industry. The 2008 Economic Review of the Travel Industry in Montana ranked rivers as 4th in the top ten attractions for vacationers to Montana. River recreation contributes to the local, regional and state economies through recreation, tourism and travel expenditures. These contributions include: purchases of equipment, food, lodging, and other amenities; job creation; and generation of tax revenues.

Although FWP is not aware of any studies that focus specifically on the economic values tied to Blackfoot River recreation, the Institute for Tourism and Recreation Research (ITRR) at the University of Montana has compiled information pertaining to the economic values associated with travel and tourism on a statewide basis. Some of these findings include:

- Nonresident travel expenditures generated over $4.31 billion in total economic impact to Montana. (2007)
- The non-resident travel industry is the fifth largest employer in Montana comprising 7% of the state's total employment. (2007)
- 76% of non-resident traveler spending in Montana is tied to visitors who are attracted to natural resources. (2006)
- The outfitting industry in Montana (excluding hunting) generated a combined impact of more than $100 million to Montana's economy. (2007)
- The average total trip expenditures for a guided angling trip in Montana is about $3500. (2007)
- The average total trip expenditures for a guided raft/canoe/kayak trip in Montana is about $1000. (2007)

Chapter 3.0 – Recreation Management Approach

3.1 Introduction

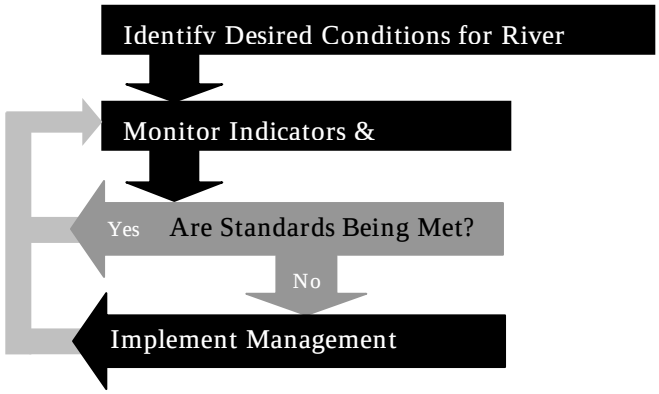
This chapter describes the overall recreation management approach and identifies management actions that can be used on a routine basis to manage recreation on the Blackfoot River and North Fork of the Blackfoot River. The management approach is organized into four categories:

- Desired Conditions
- Indicators & Standards
- Monitoring
- Range of Potential Management Actions

Figure 3.1 illustrates how the elements described in the management approach are related.

3.2 Management Approach

Figure 3.1: Management Approach Flow Chart



Desired Conditions

Desirable recreation and resource conditions are identified for each river reach. These are the conditions that the public expects to experience or encounter when recreating on the river. The desired conditions also reflect the interests of those people who live adjacent to the river and are affected by recreation. Establishing desired conditions is a critical part of managing recreation because they establish a recreation management vision for each section of the river. These are the conditions that management decisions should strive to achieve.

Indicators and Standards

Indicators and standards help to determine when and where conditions become undesirable and warrant some type of management action. An indicator is a measurable variable that is representative of acceptable or desirable conditions. A standard defines the maximum acceptable condition for a given indicator. When the standard for an indicator is reached, conditions "trigger" the implementation of a certain management action. This approach offers an objective process for determining when conditions warrant some type of management action.

Monitoring

It is important to monitor the actual conditions on the river to assess whether or not they are desirable and acceptable according to the indicators and standards. Through monitoring, FWP can determine when it is time to implement some type of management action to improve conditions. Monitoring can be expensive and time consuming. Unless carefully thought out, monitoring can also result in gathering unnecessary information. There are different ways to monitor actual conditions and attain meaningful information that will help guide management decisions. This management plan identifies three methods for monitoring conditions. These methods include professional judgment, qualitative analysis and quantitative analysis.

Professional Judgment: FWP frequently relies upon professional judgment and experience to evaluate conditions and decide on non-restrictive management actions, e.g. a decision to increase law enforcement at a particular access site where disorderly conduct is a problem. Professional judgment may incorporate written reports, comments from the public, observations in the field, or input from other agencies. More contentious problems, however, are often difficult for staff to assess, e.g. "When is it too crowded on the river?" In these situations it is more appropriate to use less subjective methods for monitoring conditions. The best approach for evaluating conditions and determining the need for management actions is a combination of professional judgment, qualitative analysis, and quantitative analysis.

Qualitative Analysis: Qualitative analysis is based on assessing visitor and landowner satisfaction and/or perception of conditions. This can be done in a number of ways including: interviews; questionnaires; comment cards; public meetings; and advisory committees. By periodically conducting qualitative analysis, FWP can identify upward or downward trends in public satisfaction and identify areas of concern. Low public satisfaction would indicate that additional management actions might be warranted to improve conditions.

Quantitative Analysis: Quantitative analysis is based on monitoring and assessing amounts of use. This type of monitoring yields quantitative data and is often based on measuring the amount of use in association with established capacities. Examples of capacity measurements used in river recreation include number of people, number of boats, and number of encounters with others. Quantitative measures are monitored through recording actual use or estimating the amount of use occurring in an area.

Potential Management Actions

A consistent presence in the field combined with the proper management of resources, sites, and facilities can play a major part in providing A high quality visitor experience. For more complex social issues such as river crowding, the department will strive to resolve problems by considering less restrictive management actions before proceeding to more restrictive management actions. Future consideration of restrictions would include opportunities for public comment and would be contingent on the department having adequate resources to properly implement them. Refer to Appendix B for a listing and description of potential management actions.

Public Information and Education

Effective and efficient communication strategies are important for sharing information with those involved in river recreation. This information can enhance the quality of a recreational experience, influence both recreationists' and landowners' actions and opinions, influence the behavior and safety of recreationists, and affect the condition of river resources. Public information and education messages can address important issues such as Leave No Trace ethics, respect for private property, aquatic nuisance species, and water safety. In addition, public information and education campaigns can provide recreationists an opportunity for self-regulation, which may help to prevent the need for regulations or restrictions on use. There are a number of means of disseminating information to the public including personal contact by staff, printed handouts and brochures, signs and informational postings at access sites, postings on the website, and news releases.

3.3 Routine Management Actions

There are a number of management actions that FWP may implement, or continue to implement, on a routine basis to manage recreation on the Blackfoot River and North Fork of the Blackfoot River (summarized below).

Public Safety & Emergency Response

Public safety and emergency preparedness is an important component to a quality river recreation program. FWP will continue to provide public information pertaining to recreating safely on the river (e.g. appropriate skills and equipment) as well as enforcing safety related rules and regulations (e.g. Personal Floatation Device requirements). Additionally, interagency emergency preparedness is a key element to effective emergency response. Cooperating agencies that are involved in emergency response efforts include:

- BLM Rangers
- FWP River Managers, Wardens and River Rangers
- Quick Response Units
- County Sheriff's Offices
- County Search and Rescue
- Montana Highway Patrol

FWP will continue to coordinate with other agencies when addressing emergency response and public safety. This coordination could build on previously completed efforts (e.g. designating helicopter landing zones and managing traffic flow at access sites). The development of an interagency incident management plan would likely further enhance existing efforts.

Data Collection

FWP will collect and evaluate recreation data to help make informed management decisions. Examples of recreation data include the volume, location, type, and/or timing of recreational use, social and resource impacts, visitor behavior and non-compliance, and, visitor satisfaction with recreation conditions.

Site Protection & Maintenance

FWP will strive to maintain public recreational and river access sites in a clean and safe manner. Management actions shall include but are not limited to routine and cyclic maintenance of roads, parking areas, boat ramps, public toilets, signs, fences, and campsites.

Chapter 4.0 – River Reaches, Settings & Desired Conditions

4.1 Introduction

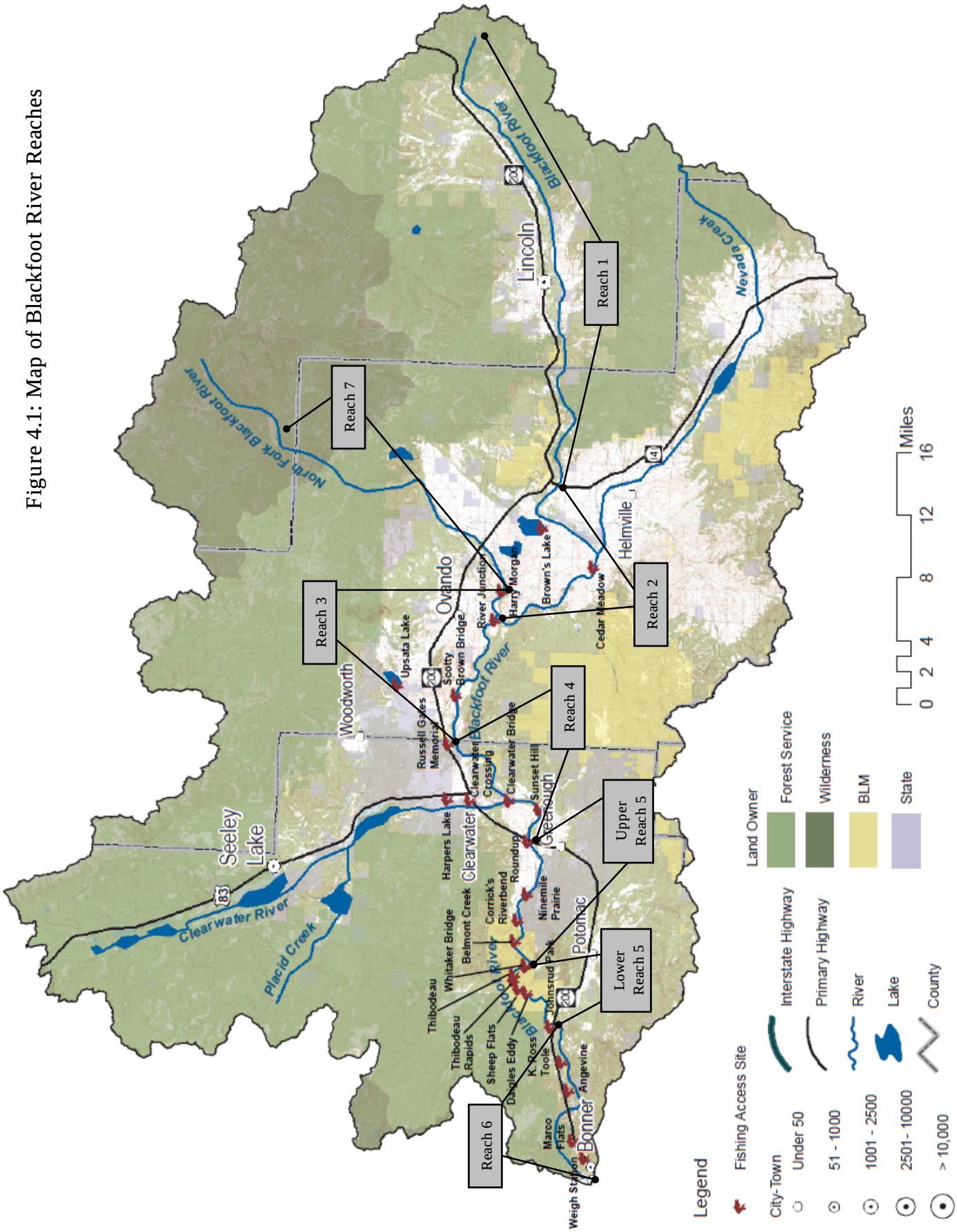
Recreation research has shown that there is no such thing as "an average visitor." People desire different conditions and recreation opportunities. With this in mind, the Blackfoot River is divided into eight distinct sections called reaches. Dividing the river into reaches allows FWP and its partners to manage for different conditions and provide different recreational opportunities and experiences. This in turn helps people to choose where to recreate based on the settings, conditions and opportunities they are likely to encounter in a particular reach of the river.

Note: Reach 5 is divided into upper and lower sections instead of being individually numbered to remain consistent with existing language in rules that apply to the Blackfoot River Special Recreation Permit (SRP) program.

The reaches are as follows:

- Reach 1 – Headwaters to Mineral Hill Area
- Reach 2 – Mineral Hill Area to the North Fork Confluence
- Reach 3 – Harry Morgan FAS to Russell Gates FAS
- Reach 4 – Russell Gates FAS to Roundup FAS
- Reach 5 (Upper) – Roundup FAS to Whitaker Bridge
- Reach 5 (Lower) – Whitaker Bridge to Johnsrud Park FAS
- Reach 6 – Johnsrud Park FAS to the Clark Fork Confluence
- Reach 7 – North Fork Blackfoot River (North Fork Falls to Harry Morgan FAS)

Figure 4.1: Map of Blackfoot River Reaches



4.2 River-wide Desired Conditions

Desired conditions are the conditions that people expect to experience when recreating on or along the river. Desired conditions also guide management goals and actions. There are some desired conditions that are common to all reaches of the Blackfoot River (listed below). Other desired conditions apply to specific reaches and are identified in the next section of this chapter.

- The Blackfoot watershed is revered for its outstanding natural resources. Recreation management decisions will take a cooperative approach to protecting these resources by involving the FWP Fish and Wildlife Division as well as counties and other resource management agencies.

- Woody debris in the Blackfoot River and its tributaries is an important component of stream health and fisheries habitat. FWP will seek to retain woody debris in the river while at the same time recognizing the need to remove or modify such debris in instances where there is a public safety concern.

- The landscape along the Blackfoot River varies depending on land ownership, land uses, and physical attributes. There is a common desire, however, to maintain a landscape that protects the views from and of the river, and a landscape that supports recreational opportunities and resource habitat.

- There is a history of cooperation between the public, management agencies and private landowners along the Blackfoot River. It is desirable to continue this cooperative approach for the benefit of all.

- The Blackfoot River and North Fork of the Blackfoot River are public resources to be enjoyed by the people of Montana and visitors to this state. They are also rivers where people seek quality recreation experiences. It is important to balance the *quantity* of recreation with the *quality* of recreation to ensure public satisfaction.

- Public safety is a key element to providing quality recreation opportunities on the Blackfoot River. There are several agencies responsible for the various aspects of public safety and it is desirable to continue a coordinated interagency approach in addressing public safety needs.

- The quality of the recreation experience on the Blackfoot River can be attributed in part to the ongoing prohibition on use of motorized watercraft on all reaches of the river.

4.3 Reach-Specific Desired Conditions

The remainder of this chapter describes the physical settings and desired conditions for each reach of the river and lists key considerations for maintaining the desired conditions. In addition, each reach has a maximum group size for commercial use, competitive events, and organized group activities (see definitions in Glossary). The maximum group sizes were established in 2005 as a part of the Blackfoot River Special Recreation Permit program and are not affected by this plan.

Note: Some reaches share the same desired conditions. However, distinctions do occur in the key considerations for maintaining the desired conditions.

Reach 1 – Headwaters to Mineral Hill Area

Setting: The Blackfoot River begins approximately 20 miles east of Lincoln and flows for 47 miles in this first reach. The river meanders through a forested valley, interspersed with openings and meadows initially, and finishes its run through a heavily wooded canyon. The river is characterized by a relatively slow gradient, low seasonal flows and numerous logjams and sweepers. Riparian land uses are primarily forestry and limited agriculture, reflecting the mix of private and public land ownership. Although Montana Highway 200 parallels this reach for much of its length, access to the river is limited. Historical recreation use has been primarily the day use activities of bank and wade fishing and swimming by the residents of Lincoln. Reach 1 has seven locations that provide public access to the Blackfoot River (see Appendix A for details).

Desired Conditions: Reach 1 provides a sense of tranquility and an opportunity to escape from the daily routine. Opportunities to see, hear or smell natural resources are widespread and prevalent. There are opportunities for visitors to experience a natural ecosystem while encountering few other people. Management presence is minimal. Facilities are rustic and blend in with the setting. Visitors to this reach are generally more experienced and self-reliant in nature and comfortable with a sense of solitude and remoteness.

Key considerations to maintaining desired conditions in this reach include:

- Manage for lower volumes of recreation use in this reach. Manage access for non-floating opportunities such as wade angling, sightseeing and wildlife viewing.
- Maintain the undeveloped, primitive character of the river corridor.
- Retain public lands to provide natural resource protection and conserve private lands for the purpose of habitat and viewshed protection.
- Monitor resource protection indicators and standards with low tolerance for resource impacts.
- Recreational facility development or improvements should not result in a net gain in parking capacity.
- Developed campgrounds should be relatively small, well managed, and occur infrequently.

Maximum Group Sizes: Organized group use and commercial float use is not permitted in this reach. The maximum group size for commercial wade angling is 3.

Reach 2 – Mineral Hill Area to North Fork Confluence

Setting: In Reach 2, the river meanders slowly through a pastoral setting for approximately 31 miles to the confluence with the North Fork. The riverbanks in this section are low and lined with brush, cottonwood and other riparian vegetation. Lands along the river are largely privately owned and dedicated almost exclusively to ranching and agricultural uses. Occasional views of cabins or dwellings and agricultural outbuildings are present. Because of the limited access, low river gradient, and meandering nature of the stream, the reach has traditionally been used by floaters seeking a quiet, peaceful float that does not require advanced boating skills. There are four locations providing public access in this reach (see Appendix A for details).

Desired Conditions: Reach 2 provides an opportunity to relieve stress in an undeveloped environment and experience a sense of tranquility away from the daily routine. Opportunities to see, hear or smell natural resources are common and prevalent, as are occasions to enjoy solitude. Socialization outside one's group is not very important, although the presence of others is expected and tolerated. Large numbers of other people are absent.

Key considerations to maintaining desired conditions in this reach include:

- Manage for lower volumes of recreation use in this reach. Maintain a rural/agricultural atmosphere with a long distance between access sites.
- Avoid creating additional access sites and/or access on department managed lands..
- Recreational facility development or improvements should not result in a net gain in parking capacity.
- Monitor resource protection indicators and standards with low tolerance for resource impacts.
- Avoid the addition of developed campgrounds on department managed lands.

Maximum Group Sizes: The maximum group size limit for organized group use and commercial use is 12. Competitive events may be permitted on a case-by-case basis.

Reach 3 – Harry Morgan FAS to Russell Gates FAS

Setting: This 12-mile reach flows through semi-open ranch lands and a timbered canyon then back into timbered hills and rangeland. The stream gradient is somewhat steeper than Reach 2 and stream flow is augmented by the North Fork, Monture Creek and Cottonwood Creek. Riparian land is essentially all privately owned with the exception of three fishing access sites (see Appendix A for details). The area is largely undeveloped with well-defined stream banks providing somewhat limited views from the stream. Due to the distance between access sites and the canyon topography, recreational use is primarily floating (angling and non-angling).

Desired Conditions: Similar to Reach 2, Reach 3 provides an opportunity to relieve stress in an undeveloped environment and experience a sense of tranquility away from the daily routine. Opportunities to see, hear or smell natural resources are common and prevalent, as are occasions to enjoy solitude. Socialization outside one's group is not very important, although the presence of others is expected and tolerated. Large numbers of other people are absent.

Key considerations to maintaining desired conditions in this reach include:

- Manage for lower volumes of recreation use in this reach. Maintain undeveloped character of corridor.
- Avoid creating additional access sites and/or access on department managed land.
- Recreational facility development or improvements should not result in a net gain in parking capacity.
- Continue to manage for walk-in and hand launch access at Scotty Brown Bridge FAS.
- Manage for float opportunities with float angling being a major activity.
- Manage for an acceptable frequency of encounters with other floaters.
- Collect recreation use data to help inform recreation management decisions.
- Limit developed campgrounds to the beginning and end of the reach.
- Avoid allowing dispersed camping to occur.
- Explore and pursue opportunities for designated float campsites.

Maximum Group Sizes: The maximum group size limit for organized group use and commercial use is 21. Competitive events may be permitted on a case-by-case basis.

Reach 4 – Russell Gates FAS to Roundup FAS

Setting: At the beginning of this 12-mile reach, approximately a mile downstream from Russell Gates FAS, the river narrows and enters a forested canyon. There is a noticeable increase in water velocity and large boulders are frequent in the riverbed. Even after the river exits the canyon, the added flow of the Clearwater River and an abundance of rocks in the stream contribute to the whitewater nature of this entire stretch. All types of whitewater boaters, both private and commercial, use Reach 4 extensively during the spring and early summer. During the summer and early fall, float and bank fishing is popular. With the exception of cabin sites on DNRC managed land at Sperry Grade, the predominate land use is forestry in the canyon coupled with agricultural uses from the Clearwater confluence to Roundup FAS. Riparian lands are predominately privately owned with some public DNRC and BLM managed land upstream from the Clearwater confluence. Reach 4 is the uppermost section of the Blackfoot River Recreation Corridor that was established by private landowners, BLM, DNRC, FWP, and Missoula County in the mid 1970's. With the exception of Russell Gates, all access points are for day use activities only and are located on private land. All total, there are three public access sites in Reach 4 (see Appendix A for details).

Desired Conditions: Similar to Reaches 2 and 3, Reach 4 provides an opportunity to relieve stress in an undeveloped environment and experience a sense of tranquility away from the daily routine. Opportunities to see, hear or smell natural resources are common and prevalent, as are occasions to enjoy solitude. Socialization outside one's group is not very important, although the presence of others is expected and tolerated. Large numbers of other people are absent.

<u>Key considerations to maintaining desired conditions in this reach include:</u>

- Manage for lower volumes of recreation use in this reach while allowing for larger group sizes during the whitewater season (May 1 through June 15).
- Recreational facility development or improvements should not result in a net gain in parking capacity.
- No additional access sites should be pursued or developed on department managed land.
- Collect recreation use data to help inform recreation management decisions. Provide developed camping only at Russell Gates FAS.
- Avoid allowing dispersed camping to occur.
- Explore and pursue opportunities for designated float campsites.

Maximum Group Sizes: The maximum group sizes for organized group use and commercial use is 30. This group size limit is increased to 40 during the whitewater season from May 1 through June 15. Competitive events may be permitted on a case-by-case basis.

Reach 5 (Upper) – Roundup FAS to Whitaker Bridge

Note: Reach 5 is divided into two sections: Upper and Lower.

Setting: The first six miles of this 10-mile reach, the portion downstream to Corrick's River Bend FAS, is very similar to the lower part of Reach 4. Ranching and forestry uses dominate, although there is a cluster of year-round residences on the north side of the river a few miles downstream from Roundup FAS. The second portion of the reach, from Corrick's River Bend FAS to Whitaker Bridge, flows through a timbered canyon on public land that is cooperatively managed by FWP and the BLM. The DNRC also manages a small parcel of riparian land in this section. This reach contains some whitewater during the first few miles, then gives way to sections of riffles interspersed with deeper pools. A gravel road parallels the river for the entire reach but in most cases is out of view from the river. The lower end of the reach contains slower scenic stretches with tall red cliff faces adjacent to the river just upstream of Whitaker Bridge. Upper Reach 5 provides six public access sites as well as a considerable amount of public land adjacent to the river (see Appendix A for details).

Desired Conditions: Similar to Reaches 2, 3 and 4, Upper Reach 5 provides an opportunity to relieve stress in an undeveloped environment and experience a sense of tranquility away from the daily routine. Opportunities to see, hear or smell natural resources are common and prevalent, as are occasions to enjoy solitude. Socialization outside one's group is not very important, although the presence of others is expected and tolerated. Large numbers of other people are absent.

<u>Key considerations to maintaining desired conditions in this reach include:</u>

- Manage for lower volumes of recreation use in this reach while allowing for larger group sizes during the whitewater season (May 1 through June 15). Maintain access for float trips, wading anglers, camping, sunbathing, swimming and wildlife viewing, along with hiking/bicycle/horse trail on the old Milwaukee Railroad roadbed.
- Recreational facility development or improvements should not result in a net gain in parking capacity.
- No additional access sites should be pursued or developed on department managed land.
- Collect recreation use data to help inform recreation management decisions. Avoid allowing dispersed camping to occur.
- Explore and pursue opportunities for designated float campsites.

Maximum Group Sizes: The maximum group sizes for organized group use and commercial use is 30. This group size limit is increased to 40 during the whitewater season from May 1 through June 15. Competitive events may be permitted on a case-by-case basis.

Reach 5 (Lower) – Whitaker Bridge to Johnsrud Park FAS

Note: Reach 5 is divided into two sections: Upper and Lower.

Setting: This 7-mile reach flows through a timbered, somewhat narrow canyon on public land that is cooperatively managed by FWP and the BLM. There are very few signs of development. The river gradient throughout the entire length of this reach is similar to Reaches 3, 4 and Upper Reach 5 - white water interspersed with pools and quiet stretches. A gravel road that parallels the river throughout the entire reach has historically provided easy access to the water and as a result, this reach has a considerable number of formal access points. This reach makes up the downstream portion of the Blackfoot River Recreation Corridor, which ends at Johnsrud Park FAS. A wide array of recreational activities are available and the reach becomes especially busy during hot summer weekends when sunbathing and inner-tubing is popular. There are five public access sites in Lower Reach 5 (see Appendix A for details) and the river is bordered entirely by public land.

Desired Conditions: Lower Reach 5 provides opportunities to escape from the daily routine and relieve stress. There are occasional opportunities to see, hear or smell natural resources and experience brief periods of solitude but socialization within and outside one's group is typical and the presence of other visitors is expected. Development in this reach may be common but is interspersed with forests, water resources, hills, valleys, canyons, open spaces and agricultural land uses. This reach is attractive for day-use and weekend visitors from nearby communities, short-term campers and large groups. These conditions are appropriate so long as recreationist behavior and natural resource conditions are acceptable and so long as the Department monitors for displacement of use to upper reaches.

<u>Key considerations to maintaining desired conditions in this reach include:</u>

- Manage this reach for high, concentrated use during the summer season.
- Closely monitor for natural resource degradation, social conditions and visitor satisfaction.
- Ensure public safety and appropriate recreationist behavior through strict enforcement of rules and regulations.
- Maintain access for float trips, wading anglers, camping, sunbathing, swimming and wildlife viewing, along with hiking/bicycle/horse trail on the old Milwaukee Railroad roadbed.
- Provide input to BLM regarding the Blackfoot River Corridor Road: public safety, road maintenance, dust abatement, etc.
- Continue new road design and construction at existing access sites.
- Avoid allowing dispersed camping to occur.

Maximum Group Sizes: The maximum group sizes for organized group use and commercial use is 30. This group size limit is increased to 40 during the whitewater season (May 1 through June 15). Competitive events may be permitted on a case-by-case basis.

Reach 6 – Johnsrud Park FAS to Clark Fork Confluence

Setting: This 13-mile reach flows through a timbered canyon with Montana Highway 200 paralleling the river throughout the entire length. There are numerous homes on various sized lots, occurring singly or in groups, scattered along the river. These residential areas are interspersed with commercial timberland and many informal access points. The river gradient is such that there are stretches of white water during run-off that become 'rock gardens' later in the year when flows dissipate. Post-runoff, the reach offers a slow moving current suitable for recreational floating, tubing, and swimming. Historically, with its close proximity to Missoula, easy access and varying water conditions, this reach has offered the widest range of recreational opportunities on the river. Users expect to encounter many people in this section on hot summer weekends. Riparian land ownership is a mix of private, Nature Conservancy, and State of Montana (FWP and MDT). Diversity and volume of use increases from the upper reaches to the lower reaches and culminates with a wide spectrum of activities available in Reach 6. Six public access sites exist in Reach 6 (see Appendix A for details).

Desired Conditions: Reach 6 provides opportunities to escape from the daily routine and relieve stress. There are occasional opportunities to see, hear or smell natural resources and experience brief periods of solitude but socialization within and outside one's group is typical and the presence of other visitors is expected. Development in this reach may be common but is interspersed with forests, water resources, hills, valleys, canyons, open spaces and agricultural land uses. This reach is attractive for day-use and weekend visitors from nearby communities, short-term campers, and large groups.

<u>Key considerations to maintaining desired conditions in this reach include:</u>

- Manage this reach for summer seasonal high, concentrated use.
- Closely monitor for natural resource degradation, social conditions and visitor satisfaction.
- Ensure appropriate recreationist behavior through strict enforcement of rules and regulations.
- Maintain access for float trips, wading anglers, camping, sunbathing, swimming and wildlife viewing, along with hiking/bicycle/horse trail on the old Milwaukee Railroad roadbed.
- Prohibit motorized use on the section of the river between the old Stimson Lumber Mill Dam and the Clark Fork confluence.
- Manage recreational use that results from the removal of Milltown Dam.
- Address safety issues related to logs exposed after the removal of Milltown Dam.
- Encourage preservation of a corridor through the Bonner Mill area that would include public access, trail connections and stream setbacks.
- Avoid allowing dispersed camping to occur.

Maximum Group Sizes: Specific group size limits were not established for Reach 6. Group size limits for organized group use, commercial use and competitive events may be permitted on a case-by-case basis.

Reach 7 – North Fork Blackfoot River – North Fork Falls to Harry Morgan FAS

Setting: The upper portion of this 25-mile reach is contained entirely within the Lolo National Forest and is typified by a fairly deep, forested canyon. A forest road follows the river to a trailhead where a trail leads 7 ½ miles into the Scapegoat Wilderness to the North Fork Falls, which is the upper end of the reach. Between the forest boundary and Harry Morgan FAS, the North Fork passes through ranch lands with large amounts of timber in places and riparian vegetation in others. Occasional ranch dwellings and outbuildings are found along the stream. The primary types of use occurring in this reach include wade angling, picnicking and camping. During periods of high water occasional whitewater kayaking occurs. Outside of the National Forest boundary access occurs primarily at road crossings. Occasional views of dwellings, roads, bridges, etc. are present. Commercial/industrial uses, subdivisions along the banks, etc. do not exist. Due to the terrain and vegetation, most developed land uses can be hidden or blended into the landscape except in some areas in the lower portions of the reach. There are two major access points in this reach (see Appendix A for details) with a considerable amount of public land adjacent to the North Fork.

Desired Conditions: Reach 7 provides a sense of tranquility and an opportunity to escape from the daily routine. Opportunities to see, hear or smell natural resources are widespread and prevalent. There are opportunities for visitors to experience a natural ecosystem while encountering few other people. Facilities are rustic and blend in with the setting. Visitors to this reach are generally more experienced and self-reliant in nature and comfortable with a sense of solitude and remoteness.

<u>Key considerations to maintaining desired conditions in this reach include:</u>

- Manage for lower volumes of recreation use in this reach. Follow the current Bob Marshall Wilderness Area Complex Management Plan for the portion of this reach contained within the Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex.
- Maintain the undeveloped, primitive character of the river corridor.
- Recreational facility development or improvements should not result in a net gain in parking capacity.
- No additional access sites should be pursued.
- Monitor resource protection indicators and standards with low tolerance for resource impacts.

Maximum Group Size: Organized group use is not permitted in this reach. The maximum group size for commercial use is 12.

Chapter 5.0 –Management Issues and Direction

5.1 Introduction

Recreation and resource management occurs on an ongoing basis and staff can accomplish much of this work with minimal oversight and direction. There are some management issues however that are more complex and therefore it is beneficial to provide guidance or direction to managers and decision-makers. The timeline for implementing management actions depends on programmatic priorities, available funding and staffing, and FWP Commission approval if new rules are required. A proactive public education and outreach program will be conducted before implementing any significant changes or new programs.

5.2 Issue: Vegetation Loss, Noxious Weeds & Invasive Species

Discussion: Recreation can result in impacts to vegetation along the river corridor. This is of particular concern in areas with high volumes of recreational use. Vegetation along the river provides habitat for wildlife, helps to stabilize stream banks and reduce erosion, and provides shade and thermal relief for fish. Impacts to vegetation can result in loss of native vegetation, soil erosion and compaction, elevated water temperatures and sedimentation, and the spread of noxious weeds. Also of concern is the transport of aquatic nuisance species within the drainage and to or from other drainages.

Management Direction: The condition of native vegetation will be monitored and maintained with attention to the prevention and/or removal of noxious weeds and aquatic nuisance species. These efforts will be coordinated with landowners and local weed districts.

INDICATOR: Vegetation Loss & Spread of Noxious Weeds Caused by Recreational Use		
Standard	*Monitoring Tools*	*Potential Management Actions*
When unacceptable levels of vegetative impacts, increase in social trails or new infestations of noxious weeds cannot be mitigated or eliminated with a reasonable level of management by FWP.	▪ Photo point data ▪ Field observations ▪ Staff reports ▪ Noxious weed data ▪ GPS noxious weed mapping ▪ Visitor/Landowner comments	▪ Refine information to specifically address vegetation loss and the spread of noxious weeds. ▪ Focus and enhance weed control efforts. ▪ Schedule weed pulling events. ▪ Equipment/watercraft wash stations ▪ Redirect existing use to an appropriate location(s). ▪ If necessary, redesign site, harden and/or delineate appropriate parking and use areas. ▪ Temporarily or permanently close site/location and rehabilitate.

5.3 Issue: User-defined Access Points & Social Trails

Discussion: User-defined access sites are unofficial sites used by the public to gain access to the river. Social trails refer to unofficial trails or paths to and along the river. In some places user-defined access sites and social trails do not cause a problem. However, sometimes problems do exist and can include the following: public safety concerns; spread of noxious weeds; conflicts with private landowners; unsafe ingress/egress with adjacent roadways; soil compaction and erosion; and damage to riparian vegetation. In most cases these access points and trails were not designed to accommodate large numbers of users. As a result, infrastructure and information pertaining to visitor safety, resource protection and quality recreation experiences may not be present. User-defined access points and trails become readily apparent in Lower Reach 5 and Reach 6 where high volumes of recreationists are present.

Management Direction: The creation of user-defined access points and social trails will be discouraged. FWP will monitor existing user defined access points and social trails at access sites to assess the impacts associated with use. If through monitoring FWP concludes that these locations are leading to a dissatisfied public, safety concerns, and/or resource impacts that cannot be reasonably addressed, attempts will be made to mitigate concerns and problems associated with the use of these areas.

INDICATOR: User-defined Access Points & Social Trails		
Standard	*Monitoring Tools*	*Potential Management Actions*
When unacceptable levels of vegetation loss, erosion, social trails and user defined parking/roadways cannot be mitigated or eliminated with a reasonable level of management by FWP.	▪ Photo point data ▪ Field observations ▪ Staff reports ▪ Visitor/Landowner comments	▪ Refine information to inform recreationists about concerns associated with user-defined areas. ▪ Assess whether user-defined areas should be made into formal access sites. ▪ If appropriate, implement a site design, harden and/or delineate use area to accommodate an amount and type of use commensurate with the desired conditions of the reach. ▪ Increase management presence at user-defined areas. ▪ Redirect existing use to an appropriate location(s). ▪ Temporarily or permanently close the site/location and rehabilitate.

5.4 Issue: Litter & Glass

Discussion: Litter remains a constant challenge, particularly in the more heavily used sections of the river. In addition to the aesthetic impacts, litter can present a risk to public safety (e.g. glass containers in the water). Some progress has been made to curtail this problem. An ongoing community-led clean-up effort in the lower reaches is widely supported and results in a substantial amount of litter and glass being removed from the river each year. A ban on glass containers has reduced the amount of glass occurring in and along the river. Mesh bags provided at the access sites have made it easier for floaters to pack out their trash (primarily cans). The fact that the lower river clean up event continues to produce litter illustrates that there is still a problem that warrants attention.

Management Direction: FWP will monitor the amount of litter found in and along the river and promote leave no trace practices to curtail littering. When littering does occur, FWP will support clean up events and focus enforcement efforts in problem areas.

INDICATOR: Amount of Litter & Glass		
Standard	*Monitoring Tools*	*Potential Management Actions*
When unacceptable levels of litter and glass cannot be mitigated or eliminated with a reasonable level of management by FWP.	▪ Surveys ▪ Public input ▪ Visitor/Landowner comments ▪ Staff reports ▪ Professional judgment ▪ Recreationist satisfaction	▪ Refine information to specifically address litter and glass. ▪ Increase informational contacts with the public at access sites and on the river to share information about rules and regulations and encourage appropriate leave no trace ethics. ▪ Increase law enforcement presence and contacts with a progressive response toward violations. ▪ Temporarily or permanently close specific locations where litter and glass are prevalent.

5.5 Issue: Human & Pet Waste

Discussion: Human and pet waste deposited upon the landscape poses both a human health and aesthetic problem. Improper disposal of human waste can pose health risks from direct contact or contaminated water. Human feces are known to contain over 100 forms of bacteria, viruses, and protozoa. There are vault toilets located at many of the public access sites and human waste is more of a problem on undeveloped areas within the corridor. Pet waste is an issue primarily in developed sites. As a part of exploring opportunities for overnight float camping it will be important to consider human waste management (see section 5.10 for more information).

Management Direction: FWP will monitor the improper disposal of human & pet waste. If conditions reach an unacceptable level, FWP will implement management actions to curtail these activities.

INDICATOR: Amount of Human & Pet Waste		
Standard	*Monitoring Tools*	*Potential Management Actions*
When unacceptable levels of human and/or pet waste cannot be mitigated or eliminated with a reasonable level of management by FWP.	▪ Surveys ▪ Public input ▪ Visitor/Landowner comments Staff reports ▪ Professional judgment ▪ Recreationist satisfaction	▪ Refine information to inform recreationists about concerns associated with human and pet waste. ▪ Increase informational contacts with the public to share information about rules and regulations and encourage appropriate leave no trace practices. ▪ Increase law enforcement presence and contacts with a progressive response toward violations. ▪ Temporarily or permanently close specific locations where human/pet waste is prevalent. ▪ Install vault latrines in locations where human waste is a problem. ▪ Require human waste pack-out and/or cat-hole techniques in locations where vault toilets are not available.

5.6 Issue: Fire Rings

Discussion: Some of the public access sites include metal fire rings, which help to eliminate the need for rock rings or pits. Fire rings and/or fires outside of designated locations can damage resources and pose a serious wildfire threat during dry conditions. Campfires are an important part of the recreation experience for some people and therefore the goal is to ensure that these fires are located in suitable locations and absent during extreme fire conditions.

Management Direction: FWP should monitor the number of fire rings or pits encountered. If conditions reach an unacceptable level, FWP will implement management actions to curtail these activities.

INDICATOR: Amount of Fire Rings		
Standard	*Monitoring Tools*	*Potential Management Actions*

When unacceptable levels of fire rings cannot be mitigated or eliminated with a reasonable level of management by FWP.	▪ Surveys ▪ Public input ▪ Visitor/Landowner comments ▪ Staff reports ▪ Professional judgment ▪ Recreationist satisfaction	▪ Refine information to specifically address fire ring impacts. ▪ Increase informational contacts with the public at access sites and on the river to share information about rules and regulations and encourage appropriate leave no trace ethics. ▪ Increase law enforcement presence and contacts with a progressive response toward violations. ▪ Temporarily or permanently close specific locations where fire ring problems are prevalent. ▪ Install metal fire rings in locations where campfires are frequent. ▪ Require fire pans in locations where campfires are frequent and metal fire rings are not available.

5.7 Issue: Recreationist/Landowner Conflicts

Discussion: Private property rights and public access under the Stream Access Law are very important to residents and visitors alike. Much of the land along the river is privately owned and at times, conflicts can arise between river recreationists and landowners. Landowner concerns include issues such as illegal camping and campfires, disrespectful behavior and trespass on private property. Recreationist concerns include issues such as fences spanning the river or the presence of undesirable viewsheds. Effective relationships and cooperation between FWP, recreationists and landowners have been and will continue to be important to the long-term viability of river recreation and stewardship of the Blackfoot River resource.

Management Direction: Recreation should occur in a manner that minimizes potential conflicts between private landowners and recreationists. FWP will communicate with both groups to monitor concerns and seek ways to protect the public's recreational opportunities while acknowledging private landowner concerns.

INDICATOR: Recreationist/Landowner Conflicts		
Standard	*Monitoring Tools*	*Potential Management Actions*
When there is an increase in the type and/or trend of landowner/recreationist conflicts.	▪ Visitor/Landowner comments Recreationist reports ▪ Field observations ▪ Staff reports	▪ Refine information to specifically address private landowner concerns. ▪ Work with landowners to facilitate the public's right to access the river under the stream access law. ▪ Increase informational contacts with the public at access sites and on the river to heighten awareness of respect for private property rights. ▪ Increase law enforcement presence and contacts with a progressive response toward violations. ▪

5.8 Issue: Access Site Design & Capacity

Discussion: Fishing access sites are popular for a wide array of recreationists and recreation use types (e.g., wade angling, float angling, whitewater boating, camping, etc.). As these access sites become more popular and

user numbers increase, site design and construction becomes increasingly important in providing quality recreation experiences. Some access sites lack a defined number of designated parking spaces and recreationists are responsible for determining where and how to park their vehicles. This can lead to problems including congestion, blocked ingress/egress and site degradation if vehicles are parked off of designated roadways and parking areas. History shows that there are busy times of the season when access site parking is at full capacity. At some sites FWP has the ability to close the entrance gate (e.g. Johnsrud Park FAS). This can result in people either leaving altogether dissatisfied with their loss of opportunity or displacement to other locations along the river. The current design and infrastructure at fishing access sites such as Harry Morgan, River Junction, Russell Gates, Roundup, Corrick's River Bend and Weigh Station may not be capable of adequately meeting the current needs of recreationists using the site during peak times.

Management Direction: Redesign efforts will be implemented for fishing access sites where current design and infrastructure is inadequate for high volumes of use. Redesigns will focus on best directing appropriate uses at sites through separation of conflicting uses (e.g. camping and day use, vehicle and pedestrian use, etc.), elimination of user defined areas (e.g. pioneered roadways, pioneered parking, social trails, etc.), delineation of parking areas and protection and rehabilitation of areas with resource protection needs. Redesign elements will be incorporated into FAS construction and maintenance priorities. FWP will monitor the use at access sites to assess the frequency of sites being over capacity. FWP will also monitor parking that occurs at unofficial sites to assess whether public safety is a concern and whether resource impacts are occurring.

INDICATOR: Inadequate Access Site Design & Access Sites at or Over Capacity		
Standard	*Monitoring Tools*	*Potential Management Actions*
When existing site design and infrastructure becomes inadequate for existing use, established access site capacity is exceeded on a frequent basis, or level of use leads to a substantial safety issue or damages to natural resources.	▪ Field observations ▪ Staff reports ▪ Surveys ▪ Visitor comments ▪ Staff reports ▪ Professional judgment ▪ Recreationist satisfaction	▪ Refine information to specifically address parking congestion, associated impacts and ways to disperse use. ▪ Separate conflicting uses at the site. ▪ Eliminate user-defined areas. ▪ Protect and rehabilitate areas with resource protection needs. ▪ Determine physical site capacity. Delineate and/or harden parking areas and use areas consistent with site capacity and desired conditions for site and reach. ▪ Focus enforcement efforts to address site capacity and ticket and/or tow illegally parked vehicles. ▪ Temporarily close the site to visitors until congestion dissipates. ▪ Establish a voluntary shuttle service to reduce number of vehicles at access sites.

5.9 Issue: Public Safety and Law Enforcement

Discussion: Unlawful and unsafe behavior in the Blackfoot River corridor threatens the public's ability to recreate in a safe and enjoyable manner and adversely affects the condition of the natural resources and recreational facilities. Some river sections and/or sites have a history of visitor behavior that involves disorderly conduct, driving under the influence (DUI), and minors in possession of alcohol (MIP, which creates a dangerous and offensive environment. Through cooperative interagency efforts involving FWP, BLM, Missoula County Sheriff's Office and the Montana Highway Patrol, the magnitude and frequency of those offences has been significantly reduced. A resurgence of unlawful and unsafe behavior could displace recreationists who do not expect or desire conditions that adversely affect their safety and enjoyment. FWP river managers, river rangers, wardens, and county sheriff officials continue to share a mutual commitment and responsibility for public safety and law enforcement throughout the Blackfoot River.

Management Direction: Throughout the Blackfoot River, FWP will strive to establish a recreational environment that is conducive to the safety and enjoyment of families and children, while protecting natural resources and recreational facilities. FWP will implement strategies to deter unlawful and undesirable behaviors through progressive enforcement actions with the intent of seeking future compliance with all public use regulations. FWP will actively identify and seek to mitigate significant public safety hazards and will work closely with cooperating agencies to provide professional responses to emergency incidents.

Indicator: Trend in the Number of Specific Law Enforcement Violations		
Standard	*Monitoring Tools*	*Potential Management Actions*

A considerable increase in incidents involving DUI, MIP, disorderly conduct, trespass, and vandalism; and/or an increase in serious accidents and injuries.	▪ Field observations and contacts ▪ Trends and statistics from law enforcement and emergency response agencies Visitor and landowner complaints ▪ Incident reports	▪ Increase law enforcement presence and contacts with a progressive response toward violations. ▪ Refine law enforcement tactics and strategies. ▪ Refine information to specifically address DUI, MIP, disorderly conduct, vandalism, and trespass. Increase penalties for violations. ▪ Restrict or prohibit alcohol. ▪ Identify and mitigate site hazards. ▪ Improve emergency response capabilities. ▪ Refine river and water safety educations efforts. ▪

5.10 Issue: Overnight Float Trips

Discussion: Overnight float trips–float trips of two or more consecutive days that involve camping along the river–are a desirable recreation opportunity for many people. Floaters have expressed interest in overnight float trip opportunities on the Blackfoot River and a limited amount of overnight float camping is already occurring. A number of factors should be considered prior to expanding opportunities for this type of activity.

As a general rule, dispersed camping (camping that occurs outside of designated areas) is more suitable for reaches of the river where the volume of use is low and infrequent and/or land ownership is mostly public. It is well documented that dispersed camping leads to problems in areas where the volume of use is high and/or frequent. Concerns include improper disposal of human waste and trash, vegetative trampling, soil compaction, and fire danger. There are social concerns too, such as the visual impact of having a high number of camping areas informally established along the river. These concerns are often compounded in places where there is a limited amount of public land along the river and trespass onto private land is more likely.

Camping opportunities along the Blackfoot River vary based on location. For example, camping within the River Recreation Corridor (Russell Gates FAS to Johnsrud Park FAS) is permitted only in designated campsites. Currently, there are six access sites that provide a limited number of designated camping opportunities along the Blackfoot River:

- Harry Morgan FAS – 4 campsites
- River Junction FAS – 6 campsites
- Russell Gates FAS – 11 campsites
- Ninemile Prairie FAS – 3 campsites
- Corrick's River Bend FAS – 11 campsites
- Thibodeau Campground – 7 campsites

The aforementioned camping areas are available on a first come, first serve basis and are accessible by road and river. This can present problems for those seeking overnight float trips for the reason that floaters have no way of knowing whether there will be a site available upon arrival. A setting where vehicular-accessible camping and float camping are mixed can also lead to social conflicts between user groups.

Establishing designated camping areas and/or sites exclusively for overnight float trips may be a viable solution. This could include new areas on suitable public land, on private land where arrangements have been made with the landowner and/or at sites within existing campgrounds that would be designated for those on overnight float trips.

Decisions regarding new overnight float camping opportunities must consider resource and social impacts such as human waste management, fire danger and trespass. Management options could require use of portable toilet systems, fire pans, and other Leave No Trace practices. All such efforts to pursue new opportunities for overnight float camping will be contingent upon the availability of staff and resources.

Management Direction: FWP will assess opportunities for overnight float trips that provide a desired recreation experience to the public as allowed by law, do not adversely impact natural resources or infringe on the rights and interests of private landowners, and are within the Department's budgetary and staffing capabilities.

INDICATORS: Camp Area/Site Suitability, Availability of Staff & Operation Resources		
Standard	*Monitoring Tools*	*Potential Management Actions*
Area or site meets public desires and management requirements.	▪ Staff reports ▪ Resource assessment ▪ Social assessment ▪ Landowner comments	▪ Pending availability of staffing and operation resources, pursue designated areas where resource and social impacts can be mitigated. ▪ Work with landowners and other agencies to explore options.

5.11 Issue: Volume of Use in Reaches 3, 4 and Upper 5

Discussion: Reaches 3, 4 and Upper 5 are fairly pristine reaches of the Blackfoot with long stretches of river away from roadways. These reaches provide much of the popular angling and whitewater boating opportunities on the Blackfoot River. During the development of this recreation management plan people offered a variety of viewpoints on the recreation conditions in these reaches of the river. Some people indicated that the number and/or frequency of encounters between floaters are important factors in determining the quality of the recreation experience. Some expressed concern that the recreation experience is diminishing. Others commented that current conditions are acceptable. Still others noted the differences between various types of recreation, e.g. angling versus whitewater boating. FWP does not currently have a mechanism in place to properly assess the perceptions of people recreating in these reaches of the river. The department also lacks sufficient information on the volume, frequency, and/or types of use occurring. This information would help the department and the public to determine the best management actions for maintaining the desired conditions.

Management Direction: FWP will use observations and data collected in the field, combined with input from visitors, landowners, other area residents, and agencies, to establish a better understanding of recreational use and desired conditions in Reaches 3, 4 and Upper 5. This information will help to inform future discussions about recreation concerns and the best means of resolving them. There are no plans to restrict use at this time. Any restrictions proposed in the future would include opportunities for public participation and would be contingent on the department having adequate resources to properly implement them.

5.12 Issue: Traffic Volume & Speed Along Blackfoot Corridor Road (Lower Reach 5)

Discussion: The Blackfoot Corridor Road extends from Highway 200 near Johnsrud Park FAS to Highway 200 near Roundup FAS. The section of the road in Lower Reach 5 (Whitaker Bridge to Johnsrud Park FAS is under the jurisdiction of, and managed by, the BLM. During the planning process, concerns were raised regarding the volume and speed of traffic on this unpaved section of road. When heavily traveled, the road generates a considerable amount of noise and dust. This dust can coat adjacent vegetation, negatively impact the

quality of the recreation experience, and present visibility problems for drivers on the road. As the season progresses, the amount of traffic leads to degraded road conditions that in turn create additional driving hazards.

Management Direction: FWP will provide input to the BLM on management of the Blackfoot Corridor Road and on addressing concerns regarding the volume and speed of traffic as well as road dust.

Indicator: Traffic Volume & Speed Along the Blackfoot Corridor Road		
Standard	*Monitoring Tools*	*Potential Management Actions*
When traffic volume and vehicle speeds lead to unacceptable levels of dust or safety concerns that cannot be mitigated or eliminated with a reasonable level of administration.	▪ Mobile Missoula County speed trailer ▪ Law enforcement statistics. ▪ Traffic counter near Darrell Sall Memorial ▪ Public complaints ▪ Staff observations ▪ Accident reports	▪ Recommend that the BLM reduce the current speed limit. ▪ Focus enforcement efforts on speed violations along the Blackfoot Corridor Road. ▪ Recommend that the BLM expand grading and dust control. ▪ Recommend that the BLM consider a shuttle system for public access between Johnsrud Park FAS and Whitaker Bridge.

Appendix A – Access Sites

Access Site (Management Authority)	River Mile	Boat Launch	Day-use Parking (Vehicle Capacity)	Restrooms	Drinking Water	Picnic Tables	Fire Rings	Camping	No. of Campsites	
Reach 1										**Comments**
Aspen Grove (USFS)	114.6		P (15)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	20	Limited watercraft access due to seasonal water conditions.
Stemple Pass Rd Bridge (Lincoln/Lewis & Clark Counties)	106.2		P (2)							County Road Bridge/Stream Access Law.
Dalton Mountain Bridge (MDT)	101.0		P (3)							County Road Bridge/Stream Access Law.
Sauerkraut Creek Access (BLM)	99.0		P							
Moose Creek/ Nevada Rd Bridge (USFS)	91.7		P (8)	✓				✓	8	Walk-in access.
Kershaw Access (BLM)	88.0		P							
Arrastra Creek (BLM)	86.0		P (5)							Walk-in access.
Reach 2										**Comments**
Mineral Hill/ Hwy 141 Bridge (BLM)	82.3		P (4)							Walk-in access.
Aunt Molly WMA (FWP)	70.2		P					✓		Carry-in/hand launch.
Cedar Meadow FAS (FWP)	64.6	✓	P (10)							Hand launch.
Newman Raymond Bridge (Powell County)	58.4		P							County Road Bridge/Stream Access Law.
Reach 3										**Comments**
Harry Morgan FAS (FWP)	2.0*	✓	P (15)	✓		✓	✓	✓	4	Gravel/river bottom boat launch.
River Junction FAS (FWP)	52.5	✓	P (15)	✓		✓	✓	✓	6	Gravel/river bottom boat launch.
Scotty Brown Bridge FAS (FWP)	44.3		P (4)							Carry-in/hand launch.
Reach 4										**Comments**
Russell Gates FAS (FWP)	40.2	✓	P (36)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	11	Gravel/river bottom boat launch.
Clearwater Bridge (6-Stall) FAS (FWP)	33.5		P (6)	✓						Carry-in/hand launch.
Sunset Hill (3-Stall) FAS (FWP)	31.0		P (3)							Carry-in/hand launch.

* Indicates river mileage from confluence of Blackfoot and North Fork Blackfoot Rivers.

Appendix A – Access Sites *(Continued)*:

Access Site (Management Authority)	River Mile	Boat Launch	Day-use Parking (Vehicle Capacity)	Restrooms	Drinking Water	Picnic Area	Fire Rings	Camping	# of Campsites	Comments
Reach 5 (Upper)										
Roundup FAS (FWP)	29.0		(50)							Trailer accessible raft slide.
Ninemile Prairie FAS (FWP)	25.2		(10)						3	Limited access.
Corricks River Bend FAS (FWP)	23.1		(20)						11	Gravel/river bottom boat launch.
River Bend Day Use (BLM/FWP)	22.4		(30)							Walk-in access.
Belmont Creek (BLM/FWP)	21.0		(10)							Walk-in access.
Red Rocks (BLM/FWP)	19.1		(15)							Walk-in access.
Reach 5 (Lower)										
Whitaker Bridge (BLM/FWP)	18.8		(50)							Concrete boat launch.
Thibodeau Campground (BLM/FWP)	18.1		(27)						7	Limited access.
Thibodeau Rapids Day-use (BLM/FWP)	17.0		(12)							Walk-in access.
Sheep Flats (BLM/FWP)	16.5		(13)							Limited access.
Daigle's Eddy (BLM/FWP)	14.9		(36)							Limited access.
Reach 6										
Johnsrud Park FAS (FWP)	12.6		(209)							Concrete boat launch.
K. Ross Toole FAS (FWP)	8.9		(20)							Limited access.
Angevine (FAS) (FWP)	7.0		(65)							Carry-in/hand launch.
Wisherd/Hwy 200 Bridge (MDT)	6.3									Gravel/river bottom boat launch.
Marco Flats FAS (FWP)	3.4		(15)							Carry-in/hand launch.
Weigh Station FAS (FWP)	1.8		(75)							Gravel/river bottom boat launch.
Reach 7										
North Fork Trailhead (USFS)	18.0*									Walk-in access.
Hwy 200 Bridge (MDT)	5.9*									County Road Bridge/Stream Access Law.

* Indicates river mileage from confluence of Blackfoot and North Fork Blackfoot Rivers.

Appendix B – Potential Management Actions

This plan is consistent with direction provided in the statewide River Recreation Rules. The following is a list of management actions that could be used to address recreation management concerns.

Enhance Information & Educational Messages

Develop and disseminate information explaining the consequences of undesirable behavior and promoting proper behavior and river etiquette both on the river and at access sites.

Increase Management Presence

Increase efforts to manage use, educate the public, maintain sites, and enforce rules and regulations in order to facilitate appropriate use, reduce conflicts and protect resources. Examples: Ranger contacts, site hosts, volunteer river stewards.

Require On-site Self Registration

Require all floaters (commercial & non-commercial) to self-register (sign-in) prior to floating as a means of distributing educational information and collecting use data, e.g. the amount, timing, location, and types of use.

Redesign Access Site(s)

Redesign access site(s) to direct recreational use at site(s), e.g. the volume, location, and/or type of use.

Provide a Shuttle System

Provide a shuttle system (vendor service) to access the river as a means to reduce vehicle congestion.

Redirect Existing Use

Redirect use amounts and/or types to more suitable locations.

Limit Parking at Access Sites

Limit and enforce the amount of parking available at an access site(s) as a way to manage the number of people and/or watercraft accessing the river or a reach of the river.

Establish Schedules for Different Use Types

Schedule different user types and/or activity types on different days, times and/or locations, etc. as a means to reduce the concentration of recreationists utilizing the same site or reach of the river at the same time.

Establish a Use Fee

Implement fees to help pay for increased management presence and/or resources.

Temporarily or Permanently Close Site/Location

Close a site or location to address impacts and conduct rehabilitation efforts.

Reduce Maximum Group Size

Reduce the maximum group size limits in a given reach as a means to address concerns related to the size of the group.

Restrict the Number of Launches

Restrict the number of watercraft launches allowed per day per reach per person as a means to reduce the number of watercraft using a reach or site during a given time period.

Require River Users to Obtain a Permit (No Limit on the Number of Permits)

Require floaters to obtain a permit to float a reach of the Blackfoot River. There would not be a limit on the number of permits issued. A fee would be charged to cover costs associated with the administration of the permit system.

Require Users to Obtain a Permit (Number of Permits is Limited – Rationing)

Require floaters to obtain a permit to float a reach of the Blackfoot River. There would be a limit on the number of permits issued. A fee would be charged to cover costs associated with the administration of the permit system.